# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 037 642 AC 006 641

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Cantor, Marjorie H. |
| TITLE | Some Correlates of Success and Satisfaction in Urban VISTA. |
| INSTITUTION | Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. School of Social Work. |
| PUB DATE | Jul 68 |
| NOTE | 159p.; VISTA Research Project, Report IV |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF-$0.75 HC-$8.05 |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Background, Educational Background, Family Background, Socioeconomic Background, *Success Factors, *Urban Environment, *Volunteers |
| IDENTIFIERS | VISTA, *Volunteers in Service to America |

ABSTRACT

A study of volunteer success and satisfaction among a group of urban VISTA volunteers who trained at Columbia School of Social Work attempted to determine what enables a VISTA volunteer to perform effectively in his field assignment, and to define the roots of volunteer satisfaction with the VISTA experience. Factors studied are grouped into five main areas of consideration: the demographic characteristics of volunteers and their social and political attitudes; the VISTA job (type of assignment and relevant job attributes); supervisor and supervision (the importance of, the mode, and the relationships established); the sponsoring agency (structure, attitudes towards the poor, and the use of volunteers); and living in the neighborhood (impact and involvement). (For other reports, see AC 002 352, AC 006 639, and AC 006 640.) (MF)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION

ED037642

#4

# Some Correlates of Success and Satisfaction in Urban Vista

by

Marjorie H. Cantor

AC006641

ED037642

# Some Correlates of Success and Satisfaction in Urban Vista

by

Marjorie H. Cantor

Vista Research Project

Report IV

Research and Demonstration Center
Columbia University School
of Social Work
July, 1968

The research reported herein was supported by the Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D. C. Contract No. OEO-478

CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION
OF THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
2 EAST 91st STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10028

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|---|
| Acknowledgements | i |
| List of Tables | ii |
| Introduction | vi |
| Research Methods | 1 |
| Background of the Volunteers | 9 |
| The Vista Job | 30 |
| Supervision | 55 |
| The Sponsoring Agency | 72 |
| Living in the Neighborhood | 102 |
| An Overview | 116 |
| Appendices | |
| A. Tables | 124 |
| B. Scales | 138 |

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have helped to make this research possible. VISTA has from the beginning encouraged and cooperated with our efforts. Particular thanks is extended to Dr. Daniel Thurz, formerly Director of Research, Planning and Evaluation, and to Mr. Albert Maisel, the present Director of Planning and Evaluation for VISTA. Both immeasurably increased the project's potential.

The Columbia University School of Social Work, through its interest in VISTA, made this research possible. Dean Samuel F. Finestone, Director of the Research and Demonstration Center, of which this project is part, has been a close advisor and warm friend.

Mrs. Mary J. Mayer, Research Associate on the Project, has been an active collaborator on this report; particular thanks is extended to her. Other members of the Project Staff, notably Miss Karen Wagner, have made considerable contributions in gathering and analysis of the data.

To the VISTA Volunteers, their Sponsoring Agencies, and the Direct Supervisors who welcomed our field visits and gave so generously of their time, particular appreciation is expressed.

Marjorie H. Cantor
Director, VISTA Research Project

June 1968

# LIST OF TABLES

Page No.

Table 1 - Volunteers' Perception of Difference Their Work Has Made in Lives of Clients by Performance Ratings of Supervisors .......................... 6

Table 2 - Older and Younger Volunteers by Performance .... 12

Table 3 - Volunteers 26 Years of Age and Over Compared with Younger Volunteers by Performance ......... 13

Table 4 - Education of Volunteer and Performance ......... 15

Table 5 - Occupation of Father and Performance of Volunteer ..................................... 17

Table 6 - Volunteers' Prior Work Experience With People and Performance ............................ 19

Table 7 - Age of Volunteer by Volunteer Satisfaction ....... 22

Table 8 - Older and Younger Volunteers by Volunteer Satisfaction ................................. 22

Table 9 - Education and Volunteer Satisfaction ........... 24

Table 10 - Father's Occupation and Volunteer Satisfaction ... 25

Table 11 - Type of Job Held in VISTA by Training Success 36

Table 12 - Type of Job Held According to Performance ...... 37

Page No.

Table 13 - Relationship Between Sex, Job and Performance.... 39

Table 14 - Relationship Between Age, Job and Performance... 39

Table 15 - Volunteers' Perception of Opportunity to Utilize Skills and Abilities and Performance............... 41

Table 16 - The Amount of Job Knowledge and Skill Possessed by Volunteer and Performance .................... 42

Table 17 - Status of Clients and Performance................. 45

Table 18 - Training Success by Performance in the Field...... 46

Table 19 - The amount of Job Knowledge and Skill Possessed by Volunteer by Satisfaction....................... 49

Table 20 - Amount of Work Available to Volunteer and Volunteer Satisfaction.................................... 50

Table 21 - Economic Status of Clients by Volunteer Satisfaction 51

Table 22 - Mode of Supervision and Performance ............. 62

Table 23 - Degree of Supportiveness of Supervision by Performance.................................. 63

Table 24 - Relationship Between Job, Degree of Support and Performance.................................. 64

Table 25 - Volunteers' Satisfaction With Supervision and Performance.................................. 65

Page No.

Table 26 - Relationship Between Type of Job, Level of Satisfaction ........................................ 66

Table 27 - Mode of Supervision by Degree of Volunteer Satisfaction ........................................ 69

Table 28 - Degree of Agency Concern With Poor and Performance........................................ 78

Table 29 - Degree of Staff Commitment and Performance...... 80

Table 30 - Agency Use of Volunteers and Performance........ 82

Table 31 - Volunteer Evaluation of Openness of Agency in New Ideas by Performance........................ 83

Table 32 - Degree of Structure and Performance............. 85

Table 33 - Volunteers' Perception of Agency Bureaucracy and Performance.................................... 86

Table 34 - Relationship Between Level of Bureaucracy, Age of Volunteer and Performance.................... 87

Table 35 - Excessive Professionalism in Agency and Performance.................................... 88

Table 36 - Degree of Professionalism in Agency and Job By Performance.................................... 90

Table 37 - Degree of Professionalism in Agency, Age of Volunteer and Performance..................... 91

Table 38 - Agency Concern With the Poor and Volunteer Satisfaction.................................... 92

Page No.

Table 39 - Degree of Staff Commitment and Volunteer Satisfaction.................................. 93

Table 40 - Utilization of Volunteer and Volunteer Satisfaction 95

Table 41 - Degree of Professionalism and Volunteer Satisfaction.................................. 96

Table 42 - Degree of Structure and Volunteer Satisfaction..... 98

Table 43 - Volunteers' Place of Residence and Performance... 106

Table 44 - Volunteers Receiving Requests for Help From Clients After Agency Hours by Performance....... 108

Table 45 - Level of Activity in Community and Place of Residence....................................... 109

Table 46 - Volunteer Satisfaction and Place of Residence...... 111

Table 47 - Place of Residence and The Difference Made by Volunteers in Lives of Clients................... 112

Table 48 - Activity in Community and Volunteer Satisfaction 113

Table 49 - Overview of Factors Associated with Successful Performance and Volunteer Satisfaction........... 117

# INTRODUCTION

For three years the VISTA Research Project has been following a group of urban VISTA Volunteers from the inception of their training at the Columbia School of Social Work through their experience in the field as Volunteers and concluding with their post-VISTA career plans. In 1967, a comprehensive first report was issued evaluating the nature of urban VISTA, the Sponsoring Agencies, the job of the Volunteer and progress with clients, and life in the neighborhood after agency hours.[1] The special relationship achieved by VISTA Volunteers with clients was discussed in a separate paper.[2] And subsequent reports detailed the effect of urban VISTA Service on the social and political attitudes of the Volunteers[3] and on their career choices.[4] This final project report concerns the correlates of Volunteer success and satisfaction. Specifically, what enables a VISTA Volunteer to perform effectively in his field assignment and what are the roots of Volunteer satisfaction with the VISTA experience?

---

[1] Cantor, Marjorie, Tomorrow is Today, A study of Urban Vista, VISTA, Washington, 1967.

[2] Cantor, Marjorie, VISTA Volunteers and the Poor, A Special Type of Helping Relationship, VISTA, Washington, 1967.

[3] Cantor, Marjorie and Wagner, Karen, VISTA Service and Volunteer Attitudes, VISTA Research Project, Columbia University School of Social Work, New York, 1968.

[4] Cantor, Marjorie, VISTA, A Source of Recruitment for the Helping Professions, VISTA Research Project, Columbia University School of Social Work, New York, 1968.

VISTA deals with twin constituencies -- the poor it serves and the Volunteers who join its ranks. It is, therefore, appropriate to investigate both the effectiveness of the Volunteers in carrying out their assignments and their satisfaction with VISTA. During the course of our research many factors were hypothesized as affecting this performance and satisfaction. In this report, these factors are grouped into five main areas of consideration, as follows:

. . . the demographic characteristics of the Volunteers and their social and political attitudes.

. . . the VISTA job -- type of assignment and relevant job attributes

. . . Supervisor and Supervision -- the importance of, the mode, and relationships established.

. . . the Sponsoring Agency -- structure, attitudes towards poor and use of Volunteers.

. . . Living in the neighborhood -- impact and involvement.

Independent measures of Volunteer performance by clients were unattainable and we, therefore, relied for performance evaluations on the judgments of the Direct Supervisors most intimately acquainted with the Volunteers and their work. Measures of satisfaction of Volunteers -- a highly personal matter -- precluded any means but direct interviews with the Volunteers. Such interviews were held on-the-job site after four months of VISTA service. (The four month period allowed Volunteers to become thoroughly adjusted to and involved in agency and job.)

For analytical purposes, we have related the many variables of job, agency etc. independently to the measures of Volunteer performance and satisfaction. The final chapter presents an overview of all significant factors and their relative strength of association with Volunteer success and satisfaction. Such a presentation does not presume definitive causal relationships. But for planning purposes, it offers a series of factors which have been found in urban VISTA to relate significantly to high Volunteer performance and high degree of satisfaction with VISTA.

In any given situation, an appraisal of the presence or absence of these factors should enable VISTA and/or Sponsoring Agency personnel to more effectively assess the potential for Volunteer success and satisfaction. It is in the light of criteria for an effective VISTA placement that the following findings are offered.

# RESEARCH METHODS

## The Sample

This study involves 111 urban VISTA Volunteers and 43 Sponsoring Agencies located in major cities across the country. Five groups of 30 Volunteers each were selected by VISTA Washington without special design from among the pool of eligible urban applicants over a period of 10 months from September, 1965 to July, 1966. Each group was sent to the Columbia School of Social Work for six weeks of VISTA training and upon completion of training were assigned to an urban agency eligible at the time to receive VISTA Volunteers. On the basis of their staggered entrance into VISTA, the last of the study Volunteers completed their year of service in September, 1967.

The fact that both Volunteers and agencies were selected over a 10-month period insured a broad representation of Volunteers and agencies.

## Data Collection

The VISTA Research Project came into existence in August, 1965 at the time of the establishment of a Training Center for VISTA Volunteers at the Columbia University School of Social Work. The scope of the project was broad, including an evaluation of both the training and field operation of urban VISTA and an inquiry into the attitudes of the Volunteers and their career plans. Data collection took place in several stages and involved the following:

1. Three waves of an attitude battery administered to all study Volunteers before and after training and after four months of service in the field.

2. An extensive structured interview with each Volunteer on their job sites at the end of four months of service.[1]

3. An interview with the Direct Supervisor of each Volunteer. During this visit each Supervisor completed a performance appraisal of the Volunteer on a rating instrument developed by the Project.

4. An end-of-service mail questionnaire completed by study Volunteers at the end of VISTA service.

The data utilized in this report come from all the above mentioned sources. Particular reference is made to the on-the-job interviews with Volunteers and Direct Supervisors and the performance appraisal by the Supervisors. A total of 188 such interviews were conducted by members of the project's research staff.

## Indicators of Performance and Satisfaction

Two major indicators are employed throughout this report: the Performance Index and the Satisfaction Index. The former measures the effectiveness of a Volunteer's performance as evaluated by the Direct Supervisor. The latter is a measure of the degree of satisfaction with VISTA as expressed by the Volunteer.

---

[1] This interview covered in detail the Sponsoring Agency, the job, training at Columbia, life as a VISTA and feelings of satisfaction, frustration, expectations for future.

These indices are cumulative scales derived from a series of independent items found either in the Performance Rating Form or the Volunteer Interview schedule. The items making up each scale had both manifest relevance to the concepts of performance and satisfaction and were substantially intercorrelated, justifying their inclusion into a scale. Such cumulative scales, of course, provide greater measurement precision than is the case for any one item.

Depending upon their cumulative scores on the scale, each Volunteer was placed on a continuum of effectiveness of performance or satisfaction with VISTA. Similarly rated individuals were subsequently classified into four groupings with respect to performance -- high, high-medium, medium-low and low performers. In the case of satisfaction, three groupings were derived - high, medium and low satisfaction.

A look at the related items going into each of the indices will give indication of the meaning of performance and satisfaction as used in this study:

Performance Index

1. Do you think the Volunteer's being here has made a difference in the lives of the people with whom he/she has worked? Please circle the point on the scale below which best represents this difference.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| very little difference | | | some difference | | | quite a lot of difference |

2. All in all, how do you evaluate the job competence of the Volunteer as demonstrated in his/her assignments to date? Choose one:

Extremely competent - can be counted on to do an outstanding job
Very competent - does excellent work
Clearly adequate - not outstanding
Just adequate
Doubtful
Clearly unsatisfactory

3. What is your overall evaluation of this VISTA Volunteer?

Would you say he/she is:

Superb, a rare Volunteer
Very good, consistently effective and dependable
Good, a solid Volunteer but without distinction
Fair, needs supervision to keep him effective
Poor, sometimes is more trouble than he/she is worth

Satisfaction Index

1. How satisfied are you with the work you have been given today?

Choose one: very satisfied, fairly satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied.

2. To what extent does your VISTA job allow you to utilize your abilities and skills? Please circle point which best describes the extent to which you feel your abilities and skills are being utilized on your present VISTA job.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a very limited extent | | | some extent | | | considerable extent |

3. On balance would you say that the satisfactions you have experienced as a VISTA Volunteer have:

Far outweighed any frustrations and difficulties
Been about equally balanced with frustrations
Been fewer than the difficulties you have experienced
I can't say

Other scales were developed from items pertaining to agency, job, supervision and living in the neighborhood. These will be introduced in the relevant chapters which follow. The technical data, including items and method of scoring, for all scales employed in this report are reported in Appendix B.

## Validity of Measures

Our whole analysis rests on confidence that the Performance Index and Satisfaction Index measure what they purport to -- i. e., their face validity.

Two things which lead us to respect our judgment about the validity of these ratings. In the first instance, both indices are composed of several highly correlated items. As such, this combination provides greater discrimination and precision of measurement, which in turn strengthens validity.

But more important, there are other data collected in the course of our research which also reflect the overall quality of performance and satisfaction. If these measures corroborate the findings of the Performance and Satisfaction Index, some reasonable measure of validity will be established.

With respect to performance, corroborative evidence is found in the Volunteers' own perceptions of their efforts. Volunteers were asked to evaluate their work in terms of its main VISTA purpose -- to help people overcome poverty. Volunteers indicated, on a 7-point scale, the degree to which they felt their presence made a difference in the lives of the people with whom they worked. (A similar question was included on the Performance Rating Form utilized by Supervisors and is part of the Performance Index). If there is any validity to the Supervisors' ratings of performance, these should bear some relationship to the Volunteers' perceptions of impact on clients, (and vice versa). In Table 1 below we find a high degree of association between the two sets of perceptions. ($P \leq .02$). Volunteers rated highly by Supervisors tend to feel they have made a moderate or considerable impact on clients, while lower rated Volunteers tend to perceive that they have made a much less difference in the lives of their clients.

Table 1. Volunteers' Perceptions of Difference Their Work Has Made in Lives of Clients by Performance Ratings of Supervisors

| | Performance (Percent of Total) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Difference in Lives of Clients | High | High-Medium | Medium-Low | Low |
| Considerable | 71 | 50 | 23 | 37 |
| Moderate amount | 22 | 29 | 48 | 41 |
| Very little | 7 | 21 | 29 | 22 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (27) | (24) | (31) | (27) |

$X^2 = 14.67$ df = 6 $P \leq .02$

With respect to satisfaction there is of course no way of obtaining an independent measure of a Volunteer's feelings. However, within the interview there was question which pertained to the Volunteer's intentions about remaining in VISTA for the entire service year. Presumably, a dissatisfied Volunteer would be more likely to consider the possibility of leaving than a more satisfied Volunteer. Volunteers were asked whether during the last four months they had considered the possibility of leaving VISTA. Sixty-one Volunteer answered "no," while 50 Volunteers indicated they had considered the possibility of leaving. This latter group was asked whether at the four-month point they still occasionally contemplated the possibility of leaving. Their responses are highly associated with their ratings on the Satisfaction Index, bearing testimony to the validity of that measure. ($P \leq .01$). Of the group of Volunteers considering the possibility of leaving VISTA, 65% have low satisfaction ratings, 27% have medium ratings and only 8% have high satisfaction ratings.

In discussing the validity of both the Performance and Satisfaction Index it is also interesting to note a high level of correlation between these two measures. In a real sense Volunteers and Supervisors, each from their own perspectives, tend to agree on the value of the contribution of the individual VISTA.

## Analysis

The purpose of our study is to test a series of hypotheses concerning the factors which relate most significantly to effective Volunteer performance and high Volunteer satisfaction with VISTA. Rather than present these hypotheses at one time, we prefer to introduce them, topic by topic, in the following pages.

In testing the hypothoses we are dealing with 285 variables of Volunteer background, job, agency supervision and living in the neighborhood. A multivariate analysis was employed and the resulting contingency tables are shown wherever appropriate. The Chi Square test of significance has been applied to these tables to determine relationship of the variables and the probability of the relationship occuring by chance.

However, the size and nature of our sample raise some question about relying solely on Chi Square results. The major objective of our study is to seek trends and relationships between variables and where such appear they are always presented and discussed in the text. For those interested in using the Chi Square results, we have considered Chi Square values at or below the .05 level as highly significant; results at the .10 level as significant. Where Chi Square values range from the .10 level to .22 level, they are indicative of trends and any value beyond the .22 level is not considered significant. In the final chapter the Cramer V Coefficient is employed to determine the relative strength of association of the various factors to performance and satisfaction.

# THE BACKGROUND OF THE VOLUNTEERS

## Introduction

It is commonly assumed in VISTA and in other service programs that the background characteristics of a Volunteer influence his potential for successful performance on the job. The performance evaluation forms utilized in the VISTA Research Project contained personality items as well as global ratings of performance. An analysis of the performance evaluations of the 111 Study Volunteers reveals high correlation between the overall performance rating of a Volunteer and ratings in four specific personality variables - maturity, independence, resourcefulness and flexibility.[1] Although such attributes are not the sole prerogative of older, better educated Volunteers, such factors as age, education, and prior experience seemed related to high performance. It is our purpose in this study to determine the correctness of such assumptions.

### Hypotheses

In the present study we hypothesized the following relationships between background characteristics of the Volunteers and Volunteer performance and satisfaction.

---

[1] Cantor, Marjorie, op. cit., pp. 218-233. Correlations between overall performance rating and ratings on personality items ranged from .56 in the case of flexibility to .62 in the case of maturity.

...Older Volunteers (22 years and above) will be more successful and satisfied than younger Volunteers (under 22).[1]

...College graduates will perform better and be more satisfied than Volunteers completing only some college[2] or high school.

...VISTA Volunteers from less affluent homes (where fathers are clerical, skilled or unskilled workers) will be more successful in working with the poor than Volunteers from upper socio-economic levels, (where fathers have managerial and professional backgrounds).

...Volunteers raised in large cities (250,000 and over) and exposed to urban conditions will be more successful and satisfied than those from small or medium size cities, suburban or rural areas.

...Men and women who bring to VISTA prior experience in social service or people-oriented activities (paid or unpaid) will perform better as Volunteers and be more satisfied.

...Performance and satisfaction will reflect a sex difference.

## Indicators

As noted previously, the performance index is used as a measure of how well the Volunteer does on the job and the satisfaction index as an indicator of Volunteer happiness with VISTA. The data on background characteristics come from a questionnaire developed by VISTA Washington and administered to all trainees at the completion of training. Most items were well-answered with the exception of questions pertaining to income and father's occupation. On these items, "no answer" ran around 22 persons, (20%).

---

[1] There are too few 18 to 19 year olds in the sample to isolate this group for meaningful comparison.

[2] By and large, these are Volunteers who have dropped out of college to join VISTA - most plan to return to school after their year of service.

## Characteristics of the Volunteers in the Study

A brief profile of the 111 Study Volunteers will help in understanding the ensuing analysis of the relevance of background characteristics to performance and satisfaction.

First, and perhaps most striking, is the youth of the Volunteers. Ninety percent are 25 years or younger. Fifty Volunteers (45%) range in age from 18 to 21; forty-nine Volunteers (44%) are 22 to 25 years of age. Only 12 Volunteers (11%) are 26 or over.

Evenly divided between men and women, most of the Volunteers are white, single and come from middle-class or affluent backgrounds. Sixty-three percent of the Volunteers had fathers in managerial, professional or semi-professional positions; the fathers of 25% of the Volunteers held white collar or blue collar jobs while only ten Volunteers (11% of the total group) reported that their fathers were unskilled workers. While they were growing up, family incomes of most Volunteers ranged from $6,000 to well over $10,000; only a few experienced real poverty in their childhood.

The Volunteers are mainly college-educated. Fifty-five percent (61 Volunteers) completed college or graduate school; 37% (41 Volunteers) had some college, while 7% (eight Volunteers) completed high school only. However, as a group they cannot be considered highly trained. The majority are typical of those on the first rung of the American professional ladder - the liberal arts graduate. Even the few who have completed professional training have rarely practiced their professions. For most Volunteers, VISTA service represents their first experience with the adult job world.

In addition to differing from the poor with whom they work with respect to class, education and race, most of the Volunteers were not exposed to large cities and urban poverty prior to coming into VISTA training. In our sample only about one-fourth grew up in large urban areas (populations of 250,000 and over), the remainder coming from suburban towns, small cities and a few from rural areas. Inasmuch as VISTA tends to place Volunteers far from their homes, most Volunteers found themselves in parts of the country new to them and in environments radically different from those of their past.

## Findings

### Demographic Characteristics and Performance

The hypotheses put forth concerning the relationship of background factors to performance proved in all cases to be unfounded. Demographic characteristics as such do not appear to play a significant role in determining high Volunteer performance. Successful performers are found among Volunteers of both sexes and all ages, socio-economic backgrounds and places of residence. Attitudes towards people and society also fail to differentiate high and low performers.

## Age

In the following tables we compare the age of the Volunteers with their performance levels as evaluated by their Supervisors after four months of service. In the first table, a Chi Square test applied to the findings indicates no significant difference in performance between older and younger Volunteers (i. e., 18-21 years as opposed to 22 and over).

Table 2. Older and Younger Volunteers by Performance

| Performance Level | Age (Percent of Total) 18-21 | Age (Percent of Total) 22 and Over |
|---|---|---|
| High[1] | 42 | 51 |
| Low[1] | 58 | 49 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (50) | (61) |

$X^2$ not significant

However, anyone spending time with VISTA Volunteers senses a considerable difference between middle-age or elderly Volunteers (anywhere from 30's to 70's) and young VISTAS in their late teens or early twenties. Most VISTA Volunteers, it has been noted, are in their early twenties, but there are enough older Volunteers to cause us to wonder whether the picture of their performance might not be significantly different from that of younger Volunteers.

---

[1] In this and in subsequent tables, we combined "high" and "high-medium" performance into a "high" category and "medium-low" and "low" into a "low" category. Findings are not significantly altered by this combination.

Unfortunately, because in our sample there are only 12 Volunteers, 26 years of age or over, it is only possible to make tentative statements about this age group. In the following table the performance of Volunteers 26 and over is compared with the level of achievement of the other two age groups -- 18 to 21 and 22 to 25.

Table 3. Volunteers 26 Years of Age and Over Compared with Younger Volunteers by Performance

| | Age (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | 18-21 | 22-25 | 26 and Over[1] |
| High | 42 | 47 | 67 |
| Low | 58 | 53 | 33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (50) | (49) | (12) |

$X^2 = 2.37 \quad df = 2 \quad P \leq .31$

As can be seen, Volunteers in the two younger age categories -- 18-21 and 22-25 -- have similar performance patterns. Volunteers aged 22 to 25 perform no better than do those 18-21 years old. (These two categories, it should be remembered, include the vast majority of Volunteers

---

[1] The 26 and over group includes the following age distribution:

| Age | Number of Volunteers |
|---|---|
| 26 - 29 | 2 |
| 30 - 39 | 2 |
| 40 - 49 | 4 |
| 50 - 59 | - |
| 60 - 69 | 2 |
| 70 plus | 2 |

in VISTA and in our sample.)

The picture for Volunteers 26 years old and over is different. There are significantly more high performers in the older age group.[1] This result, coupled with our general experience visiting VISTA Volunteers in action, suggests that middle-aged or elderly Volunteers capable of surviving the rigors of VISTA training and the early months in the ghetto have high potential as successful VISTA Volunteers. Of course, any definitive finding with respect to older Volunteers must await further study with a larger representation of Volunteers 26 years and over in the sample.

In any overall consideration of the impact of age on performance, age is a weak criterion of success. It must be stressed that most Volunteers range in age from 18 to 25 years and within this narrow range there is no discernible difference in performance. Qualities of maturity, flexibility and responsibility appropriate to the VISTA situation apparently can be found in 18-19 year olds as well as in Volunteers of 22 or 23 years.

### Education

Our sample of 111 Volunteers is almost evenly divided between Volunteers who have completed college or graduate school and those who have dropped out of college to join VISTA for one year. (There are only eight high school graduate Volunteers and for purposes of comparison they are included in the "some college" category). The following table compares the performance level of the two groups - some college and college graduates.

---

[1] Because of the few cases 26 and over, and the similarity of findings in the case of the two other age groupings, Chi Square test applied to the age data as a whole only reveals a trend - $P \leq .31$.

Table 4. Education of Volunteer and Performance

| Performance Level | Education of Volunteer (Percent of Total) Some College | College Graduate |
|---|---|---|
| High | 41 | 52 |
| Low | 59 | 48 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (49) | (61) |

$X^2$ not significant

College graduates do not perform significantly better than do Volunteers who have only completed some college or high school. It would appear that if college dropouts, (most of whom are under 21) are given proper placements and adequate supervision, they can be expected to perform as well as college graduates.

It should be noted that the 43 urban sponsoring agencies studied here offered substantial supervision to young and older Volunteers alike.[1] It may well be that in a less structured and less well-supervised VISTA situation, differences in performance level might occur between younger and older Volunteers or between college dropouts and college graduates.

---

[1] Younger Volunteers did not receive more supervision or supervision of a more highly structured nature than did older Volunteers (22+)

As one would expect, in our sample Volunteer age and education coincide to a considerable degree. Younger Volunteers, 21 and under, are usually those who have only completed some college. Volunteers 22 and over have generally completed college although there are a few Volunteers in their 50's and 60's who are only high school graduates.

### Sex

There is an almost equal distribution of men and women in our sample of 111 urban Volunteers. When performance levels are looked at, in terms of sex, no differentiating pattern emerges. Men and women are almost equally divided between high and low performers (Appendix A, Table A-1).

### Socio-economic Status

As has been previously noted, the Volunteers' socio-economic status does not have a wide range. Most come from middle-class or affluent homes. Only a handful were poor while growing up. It is, therefore, impossible to make any statement about the relative effectiveness with the poor of middle-class as opposed to poverty background Volunteers. If, in the future, VISTA recruits more young people from deprived backgrounds, such comparisons could be made.

However, within the group of Volunteers studied there were Volunteers from more affluent and less affluent backgrounds. Several measures of socio-economic backgrounds were available including father's occupation, income, education of parents. In our sample, all measures were highly inter-correlated so we have used only one measure -- father's occupation -- to examine the relationship between socio-economic background of the Volunteers and their performance.

Table 5. Occupation of Father and Performance

| Performance Level | Father's Occupation (Percent of Total)<br>Professional, Semi-Professional, Managerial | Clerical, Skilled Worker | Unskilled[1] Worker, Farm Laborer |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 50 | 35 | 50 |
| Low | 50 | 65 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (56) | (23) | (10) |

$X^2$ not significant

The above table indicates no significant difference in the probability of Volunteers from any particular socio-economic background becoming high performers. Volunteers from professional-managerial backgrounds do not appear to be limited in their ability to relate to[2] and work effectively with the poor. But by the same token Volunteers from more modest or even poverty backgrounds do not perform measurably better. It would appear that the socio-economic background of a Volunteer is unrelated to his future capacity to perform effectively as a VISTA Volunteer.

---

[1] Although there are only ten unskilled workers in the sample of fathers, we prefer not to combine this group with clerical and skilled workers. The economic conditions of the two groups are too dissimilar -- most of the Volunteers growing up at or near the poverty level are represented in this group of unskilled workers.

[2] The performance rating form has a specific item relating to ability to get along with clients. Scores on this single item correlate almost perfectly with overall performance rating.

### Place of Residence While Growing Up

It was hypothesized that Volunteers exposed in childhood to urban life would more readily adjust to ghetto poverty and urban VISTA. If in fact the adjustment was easier for "big city" Volunteers, this more rapid adjustment does not appear to have materially affected VISTA performance in the long run. By the time Volunteers were on the job for at least four months, there was no appreciable difference in the performance levels of Volunteers raised in large urban cities (250,000 and over), those raised in suburban or middle-sized cities (50,000 - 250,000) or those who grew up in rural areas and small towns (up to 50,000 population). (See Appendix A, Table A-2). Apparently, the training period in which VISTAS are immersed in the life of the urban ghetto, acts to compensate for any lack of experience in big city living on the part of Volunteers from rural areas or smaller communities.

### Previous Experience With People

In an attempt to ascertain whether prior experience working with people in a group or social welfare setting positively affected performance, the background of the Volunteers were studied. Of the 111, 62 Volunteers reported some relevant part-time or full-time experience (including summer camp jobs, settlement house work, tutoring, etc. ). When the performance of this "experienced" group is compared with the performance of Volunteers entering without relevant work experience, no significant differences are found.

Table 6. Volunteers' Prior Work Experience With People and Performance

| Performance Level | Prior Experience (Percent of Total) Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| High | 46 | 48 |
| Low | 54 | 52 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (69) | (42) |

$X^2$ not significant

It would appear that prior experience with people does not, in and of itself, make a significant difference in long run performance of a VISTA Volunteer.

## Basic Attitudes About People and Democracy

The absence of relationships between demographic characteristics such as sex, age, education, etc. and level of performance in VISTA is striking. It would appear that we must look to other dimensions of the total VISTA experience for significant determinants of Volunteer effectiveness in a given placement. Agency, job and supervision seem logical areas of inquiry. But equally important may be the basic attitudes about people, the democratic process and the helping role which Volunteers bring with them when they enter VISTA and which may be altered by the training process and experience in the field.

In order to study the attitudes of the Volunteers a questionnaire incorporating nine commonly used attitude scales was administered to all study Volunteers at the inception of training, at the end of training and after four months in the field.[1] These scales measured Volunteer attitudes in five principal areas:

- Commitment to democratic process
- Political and economic liberalism
- Belief in the efficacy of action in alleviating social problems
- Feelings of connection with society
- Tolerance towards persons different from self

The results of the tests indicated that as a group the 111 Volunteers were liberal, tolerant, positively inclined towards the democratic process, convinced of the efficacy of group action and, to a lesser extent, individual action as well as generally connected to society and its norms.

A separate comparison of the attitude scores of the 26 highest performing VISTA Volunteers with the 21 Volunteers with the lowest performance ratings indicates no significant difference in attitudes between the two groups. (See Appendix A, Table A-3.)

It would appear that differences in performance cannot be attributed to different perspectives about people or society. With attitudes and demographic characteristics eliminated as discriminators of high and low performance, it becomes even more important to look at the factors of job, supervision and agency.

## Demographic Characteristics and Volunteer Satisfaction

Some interesting relationships appear when demographic characteristics are related to the degree of satisfaction expressed by the Volunteer with his/her VISTA experience (as measured by the Satisfaction Index). Unlike performance, satisfaction appears related in varying degrees to such factors as education and socio-economic status. There is, however, no relationship evident between satisfaction and either sex or place of residence when growing up. Age is not a discriminating factor in regard to satisfaction for the majority of Volunteers who range in years from 18-25. Among older Volunteers (26 plus), however, satisfaction with VISTA is unusually high.

---

[1] For a full report of the testing of attitudes see Cantor and Wagner, op. cit.

## Sex and Place of Residence When Growing Up

Men and women are equally satisfied or dissatisfied with VISTA. The type of community in which a Volunteer is raised also has no bearing on future satisfaction with VISTA, again pointing to the ability of Volunteers from a variety of environments to adjust to big city ghetto life.

## Age

When the Volunteers are divided into younger Volunteers (18-21)[1] and older Volunteers (22 and over)[2], no significant difference in the proportion of high, medium, and low satisfaction is found between the two age groups.

---

[1] This group, it is interesting to note, coincides with college age and includes most of the college dropouts.

[2] At age 22 most students have graduated from college and this group in our sample includes most of the college graduates and graduate students.

Table 7. Age of Volunteer by Volunteer Satisfaction

| Level of Satisfaction | Age (Percent of Total) 18-21 | 22 Plus |
|---|---|---|
| High | 22 | 26 |
| Medium | 36 | 39 |
| Low | 42 | 35 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (50) | (61) |

$X^2$ not significant

However, if the Volunteers 26 years and over are looked at separately a different picture emerges.

Table 8. Older and Younger Volunteers by Volunteer Satisfaction

| Level of Satisfaction | Age (Percent of Total) 18-21 | 22-25 | 26+ |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 22 | 20 | 50 |
| Medium | 36 | 41 | 33 |
| Low | 42 | 39 | 17 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | 50 | 49 | 12 |

$X^2 = 5.558$ df = 4 $P \leq .24$

Just as we found that Volunteers 26 and over tended to perform better, it also appears that Volunteers in this age bracket are more likely to be satisfied with VISTA. The proportion of Volunteers over 26 in our sample who were highly satisfied far exceeds the similar proportions among the other two age groups, while the proportion of low satisfaction among Volunteers 26 and over is remarkably small. However, it is necessary to caution that this finding, as with the similar finding re performance, can only be considered tentative, because of the small number (12) of Volunteers 26 years of age or over in our sample.

The high satisfaction registered among middle-aged and elderly VISTA Volunteer is corroborated by the high reenlistment rate among this group and by their comments in interviews. As was noted in the performance section of this chapter, VISTA represents a very positive experience for those older Volunteers selected to enter its ranks. Such Volunteers comment particularly on the new lease in life VISTA offers them and the renewed opportunity to put their abilities and previous training to meaningful use for someone else. Their previous years of work and life experience probably enable them to adjust more easily to the work situation, further enhancing the potential for high satisfaction.

For the bulk of VISTA Volunteers, however, who fall between the ages of 18 and 25, age is not a discriminating factor in determining the prognosis for Volunteer satisfaction.

### Education and Socio-Economic Status

Education and socio-economic status, on the other hand, appear to be significantly related to VISTA satisfaction in the case of most Volunteers, although the relationships are negative ones. The more highly educated and the higher the socio-economic status, the greater the likelihood that Volunteers will be more critical of agency, job and total VISTA experience. As a result, the general satisfaction level of such Volunteers is somewhat lower than among students who have interrupted college to take a year in VISTA or Volunteers from somewhat less affluent backgrounds. (There are only 4 or 5 Volunteers in the group from poverty backgrounds).

The following tables illustrate these relationships. With respect to socio-economic status, the Chi Square test indicates significant differences. $P \leq .05$) In the case of education, the differences are not significant but point to a definite trend. ($P \leq .23$)

Table 9. Education and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Amount of Previous School (Percent Total) | |
|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | High School Or Some College | College Graduate Or Graduate School |
| High | 26 | 23 |
| Medium | 45 | 33 |
| Low | 29 | 44 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (49) | (61) |

$X^2 = 2.98$ df = 2 ($P \leq 0.23$

## Table 10. Father's Occupation and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | (Percent of Total)<br>Occupation of Father | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | Unskilled Worker | Clerical and Skilled Worker | Professional-Managerial[1] |
| High | 30 | 30 | 18 |
| Medium | 70 | 26 | 36 |
| Low | - | 44 | 46 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases[2] | (10) | (23) | (56) |

$X^2 = 9.72$ df = 4 $P \leq .05$

[1] Includes professional, semi-professional, and managerial.

[2] Twenty-two Volunteers failed to specify the occupation of their fathers and are not included herein. "No answer" was most frequent among older Volunteers in their 40's to 70's.

The negative relationship between socio-economic status or education and Volunteer satisfaction holds constant whether the Volunteer is involved in a service-bridge assignment or in community organization.

It is interesting to speculate why upper income and/or better educated Volunteers are somewhat less satisfied with their VISTA experience. Perhaps the adjustment to poverty is more difficult from affluent backgrounds, but the depth interviews held with the Volunteers gave no indication of this. In fact, the more highly educated and affluent Volunteers frequently were those who plunged most completely into life with the poor. In addition "higher socio-economic and/or college graduate" Volunteers related as well to their clients and performed as well as other Volunteers according to their Supervisors.

A possible explanation for the differences in satisfaction level among Volunteers of various socio-economic status may lie in the area of upward mobility. VISTA service and particularly the opportunity to associate with helping professionals[1] offered many lower-middle class and working class young people definite opportunity for upward movement. For such Volunteers, particularly Negroes, career opportunities emerged during the course of VISTA service and the experience gained as pre-professionals in social agencies and schools could bridge their entrance into professional careers. For these young people VISTA was truly a gateway to the future.

In the case of the college graduates and graduate lawyers, teachers, etc. as well as Volunteers from more affluent backgrounds, upward mobility was not as operative a cause for satisfaction. For many of the more highly trained Volunteers, some VISTA tasks could be less demanding, less likely to utilize the full range of skills and abilities of these Volunteers. Having personally less to gain from VISTA experience, the upper income, better educated Volunteer tended to be less tolerant of any shortcomings in VISTA and any deviations from its expressed goal of helping the poor overcome poverty.

---

[1] Our data indicates that VISTA Volunteers were most frequently associated with agency professionals both in day-to-day activities and in the eyes of agency staff and clients.

As a group, the college graduates in our sample, were more discriminating about what they liked and what they found wanting in their agency, job, Supervisor and VISTA Washington. Their more developed critical sense is, of course, compatible with higher education and more experience, but by the same token it tends to mitigate against overwhelming satisfaction as a Volunteer.

However, what has been said so far is not meant to imply that Volunteers who are college graduates or from upper income families will, as a group, be dissatisfied with VISTA. On the contrary, over half of such Volunteers in our sample were eminently pleased with their VISTA experience. But it is likely that such Volunteers will be less easily satisfied with a mediocre VISTA and less willing to accept assignments uncritically than will Volunteers from low income families, for whom VISTA is an upwardly mobile experience, or college dropouts for whom VISTA is a respite during which to clarify personal or career goals.

## Summary and Contrast

We have studied the relationship at a series of demographic and attitudinal variables to Volunteer performance and satisfaction. Among the variables were age, sex, education, socio-economic status, place of residence while growing up, and previous work experience. Attitudes tested concerned the democratic process, society and the role of the individual and the group in effectuating social change.

The background characteristics of the study Volunteers did not as such, play a significant role in discriminating between successful and unsuccessful performance. The performance of the study Volunteers was unrelated to sex, age,[1] education, socio-economic status, or place of residence when growing up. Whether or not a Volunteer had prior experience with people before coming to VISTA also made no difference with respect to his/her level of effectiveness. When the attitudes of the Volunteers were looked at we find that effective and ineffective Volunteers alike possessed very positive, liberal, tolerant attitudes. It appears that differences in performance cannot be attributed to different perspectives about people or society or to differences in Volunteer background.

Unlike performance, Volunteer satisfaction in VISTA does appear to relate to certain demographic characteristics.

No relationship is found between Volunteer satisfaction and age,[2] sex, place of residence when growing up or prior work experience.

Education and socio-economic level, however, do appear to be significantly related to VISTA satisfaction, although the relationship is negative. The more highly educated a study Volunteer and the higher his socio-economic level the greater the likelihood that he/she will be more critical of agency, job and total VISTA experience. As a result the level of satisfaction of such Volunteers was found to be somewhat lower than among Volunteers who had less education or came from somewhat less affluent backgrounds.

---

[1] There was a trend for Volunteers 26 and over to perform somewhat better than young Volunteers. But the number of "older" Volunteers in our sample is too small to consider this finding definitive. For the vast majority of Volunteers in their late teens and early twenties age is not a discriminating factor.

[2] Although age was not a discriminating variable for a majority of the study Volunteers, there was a trend towards greater satisfaction in the case of Volunteers 26 and over. As noted with respect to performance, the number of "older" Volunteers in our sample is too small to consider such a finding definitive.

These findings suggest that VISTA Volunteers who have completed college or had graduate training or who have been exposed to greater affluence bring a more highly developed critical sense to their VISTA experience. Such Volunteers, it would appear, demand more from VISTA and their sponsoring agencies than do Volunteers from lower income families, for whom VISTA is an upwardly mobile experience, or college dropouts, for whom VISTA offers a respite in which to clarify personal or educational goals.

# THE VISTA JOB

## Introduction

In urban poverty, VISTA Volunteers perform a variety of helping jobs. Some Volunteers are engaged in organizing community groups (i. e., tenants, welfare recipients) to demand their rights. Other Volunteers counsel and intervene on behalf of individuals with clinics, welfare offices, housing authorities etc. Still others teach illiterate adults, tutor school drop-outs, assist in Head Start programs, work with offenders in Bail Bond Projects or with the mentally retarded. These various tasks are carried out under the direct supervision of a staff member of the VISTA Sponsoring Agency.

The study Volunteers were trained at the Columbia University School of Social Work for work in urban community action programs. As such, the main emphasis was on community organization, although the importance of direct service was never minimized.

## Hypotheses

VISTA has been widely publicized as an enabling force in the struggle of the poor to overcome poverty. Because Volunteers at Columbia were oriented towards direct involvement with the poor in community action, we, therefore, hypothesized that Volunteers placed on community organization assignments would perform better and be more satisfied with their VISTA experiences.

A hypothesis suggesting greater achievement and satisfaction on community organization jobs is, of course, based on a task orientation towards job. However, there are other job-related factors which can affect a Volunteer's ability to perform and his job satisfaction. We further hypothesized that Volunteers would perform better and be more satisfied on VISTA jobs which incorporated the following job characteristics:

- . . . an opportunity to utilize skills and abilities.
- . . . work which would not get done without the presence of the VISTA Volunteer.
- . . . assignments which are real, not "makework" to keep the Volunteer occupied.
- . . . assignments which involve working directly with the poor.
- . . . assignments which offer enough work to keep the Volunteer occupied, but not so much as to be overwhelming or too little to keep him occupied.

Two final hypotheses concerning the job arose from our observations about the importance of adequate training for Volunteers and the relationship between success in training and job success as follows:

- . . . Volunteers who feel they have the necessary skills to perform their VISTA jobs will achieve greater success and be happier with their VISTA experience, and
- . . . Volunteers considered outstanding in training (by training staff) will be most successful in the field.

## Indicators

### Task Classification

In order to determine whether Volunteers are more successful and happier on community organization jobs, it is necessary to classify the jobs according to their principle tasks. As a basis for such a task-oriented classification, all study Volunteers were asked to describe in detail their assignments and the amount of time spent on each component if several functions were involved. An analytic study of the 111 job descriptions revealed that three distinct functions occurred in one or more combinations in most of the VISTA jobs.

In the first report of the VISTA Research Project, Tomorrow is Today, these functions were conceptualized as the bridge, service and catalyst function and became the basis of a classification system employed throughout our research efforts. In this system the components are briefly defined as follows:

Service Function

Service to individuals - working with an individual or family on an on-going basis, counselling, referral or intervention on behalf of client

Service to groups - maintenance service to self-help groups - tutoring, teaching, leading group, acting as resource person.

Bridge Function

Communicators between poor and outside world. Carry message of agency and its available services into community - carryback needs of poor to agency. Survey community needs, recruit, publicize, perform escort service on short-term basis.

Catalyst Function

Organizes or assists in the organization of community groups concerned with altering the power position of poor. May offer maintenance services after groups are organized.

Utilizing these definitions, the job of each Volunteer was classified as either a bridge, a service or a catalyst job. (Where more than one function was involved, time allocation was the decisive criterion).

## Job Characteristics

To determine the existence of specific job characteristics, a series of descriptive statements about a job were evolved and presented to the Volunteers for their reactions. (See Appendix for the items used).

The responses to these items provided a job profile which could then be related to the level of performance and satisfaction.

It is important to note that we are dealing in this report with the Volunteers' perceptions of their jobs and not objective measures of the presence or absence of the specified characteristic. Basically our analysis asks whether a Volunteer who perceives his job as embodying certain characteristics will perform better or be happier than the Volunteer who sees an absence of such characteristics in his/her job. In this way we hope to isolate the job components which relate significantly to high performance and high satisfaction. Although our study was conducted with a sample of urban Volunteers, the job functions and job characteristics under investigation are generic and should apply to other VISTA Volunteers as well.[1]

Training Success Index

At the end of training in preparation for the VISTA Selection Board, the performance of each potential VISTA Volunteer was evaluated by the Columbia training staff.

In order to facilitate comparisons between training and four-month field performance identical questions were utilized in both rating periods as follows:

> All in all, how do you evaluate the job competence of the (Volunteer) (trainee) as demonstrated in his/her assignments to date? (Extremely competent, clearly adequate, just adequate, doubtful, clearly unsatisfactory)
>
> and
>
> What is your overall evaluation of this (Volunteer) (trainee)? (Superb, very good, good, fair, poor.)

In addition, the training staff rated each trainee as to relative position in the class (i.e., top 25%, middle 50% or bottom 25%). These three items were subsequently combined into a single measure of success in training called the Training Success Index. Volunteers were scored on this index and, on the basis of their cumulative ratings, classified as highly successful, moderately successful, or minimally successful in training.

---

[1] We are, of course, presuming that the background characteristics of future VISTA Volunteers will remain similar to present Volunteers. If more Volunteers are recruited from poverty backgrounds, or from older populations, the relative importance of some of the job characteristics as prognosticators of success and satisfaction could change.

## The VISTA Job of the Study Volunteers

Although trained for community action, a majority of the Study Volunteers found themselves involved in service assignments rather than community organizations jobs. Fifty-nine Volunteers (53%) were assigned by their Sponsoring Agencies to jobs only involving giving direct service to individuals, groups or both. Twenty-five VISTAS (23%) had jobs principally incorporating the bridging function, while 27 Volunteers (24%) were engaged in catalyst jobs (or community organization assignments, as they are commonly called).

Although an attempt was made at the end of training to match characteristics of Volunteers with needs of Sponsoring Agencies, "stronger" Volunteers were not sent to particular kinds of jobs. A comparison of the level of performance achieved during training (as measured by the Training Success Index) with eventual job assignments reveals that Volunteers placed on catalyst jobs were no more able than those on bridge or service jobs. Any difference in Volunteer performance or satisfaction cannot, therefore, be ascribed to differential placement patterns.

Table 11. Type of Job Held in VISTA by Training Success

| Level of Training Performance | Type of VISTA Job (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Service | Bridge | Catalyst |
| High | 34 | 40 | 33 |
| Medium | 44 | 24 | 41 |
| Low | 22 | 36 | 26 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (59) | (25) | (27) |

$X^2$ = not significant

## Findings

### The VISTA Job and Performance

#### Type of Job

Our first hypothesis pertains to the type of VISTA job held by the Volunteer. We expected that VISTA Volunteers on community organization (catalyst) assignments would perform better than Volunteers on either bridge or service jobs. We see, in the following table, that our assumption is correct.

## Table 12. Type of Job Held According to Performance

|  | Type of VISTA Job (Percent of Total) |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Bridge[1] | Service | Catalyst[2] |
| High | 26 | 15 | 44 |
| High-medium | 19 | 27 | 16 |
| Medium-Low | 28 | 36 | 12 |
| Low | 26 | 22 | 28 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (27) | (59) | (25) |

$X^2 = 10.914$ df = 6 $P \leq .09$

[1] This includes 10 jobs involving only bridging activities, 15 jobs involving bridging and service and two jobs including the functions of bridge and catalyst.

[2] Includes all jobs involving catalyst except those combined with bridging.

Although there are low and high performers on all three types of jobs, a greater proportion of highly rated Volunteers is found on catalyst jobs than either bridge or service jobs. ($P \leq .09$). The proportion of highly rated Volunteers on bridge jobs is, however, significantly higher than on service jobs; "service" Volunteers tending to be more heavily concentrated in the middle range of performance (63% are rated either High-Medium or Medium-Low).

This suggests that, if Volunteers are involved in some outreach activity (visiting neighbors, recruiting, making neighborhood surveys, etc. ), there is a greater likelihood of superior performance. Among the group of urban Volunteers studied, performance was generally lower when Volunteers were only involved in the more highly structured and circumscribed jobs of teaching, tutoring or leading clubs and recreational groups within the confines of a community center or school. It is likely that VISTA Volunteers need the stimulation of more direct involvement to insure a high level of performance. The best performers, as hypothesized, were the men and women working directly in the community, organizing and assisting in the organization of groups of citizens for social action. (This difference in performance, it must be remembered, is not due to the initial placement of more able Volunteers on catalyst jobs).

If Volunteers holding community organization jobs perform better than Volunteers on bridge or service assignments, is this true for both men and women? In the following table the variable of sex is introduced. We find that men and women perform approximately the same on community organization jobs. However, on bridge-service assignments, women are somewhat more successful than men.[1]

---

[1] The job categories of bridge and service have been combined into a single classification. Of the 27 persons on bridge jobs, only 10 were solely engaged in bridging functions. Most of the remainder were also involved in giving direct service. We, therefore, made a combined service-bridge job and utilized this classification in the following and most subsequent tables.

Table 13. Relationship Between Sex, Job and Performance

(Percent of Total)

| Performance Level | Service-Bridge Jobs Male | Service-Bridge Jobs Female | Community Organization Jobs Male | Community Organization Jobs Female |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High | 39 | 48 | 56 | 55 |
| Low | 61 | 52 | 44 | 45 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (36) | (46) | (16) | (11) |

When age is introduced as a variable, some interesting findings result. We see in Table 14 that younger Volunteers (18 through 21) perform considerably better on community organization jobs than do older Volunteers (22 and over). Conversely, older Volunteers are more successful on service-bridge jobs.[1]

Table 14. Relationship Between Age, Job and Performance

(Percent of Total)

| Performance Level | Service-Bridge Jobs 18-21 | Service-Bridge Jobs 22 + | Community Organization Jobs 18-21 | Community Organization Jobs 22 + |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High | 35 | 50 | 70 | 56 |
| Low | 65 | 50 | 30 | 44 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (40) | (42) | (10) | (17) |

---

[1] When we examine the performance levels of Volunteers who have only completed some college, we find that they are more successful in community organization jobs than are the college graduates but less successful in service jobs. In our sample age and education tend to be correlated and are probably not operating independently with respect to job. See Appendix A, Table A-4.

The finding that Volunteers 22 and over did not perform as well in catalyst jobs is most surprising. We assumed that maturity and stability were particularly important in community organization and expected, on the whole, that older Volunteers would be better able to stand the strain of this difficult work. But apparently community organization jobs require considerable flexibility, inventiveness, physical stamina and willingness to plunge into unknown and sometimes dangerous situations. The actual tasks involved in such jobs and the required skills have not yet been clearly delineated by social workers and other involved professionals. The resulting fluidity of expectations and demands may prove easier for younger Volunteers and be an important factor in their success on catalyst assignments.

As time goes on and such jobs become better defined and more carefully structured, the advantage accruing to youth from flexibility may be somewhat offset by the greater maturity and stability of the older Volunteers. However, if we think of the VISTA Volunteers in community organization as front line troops, youth may always be an important advantage.

### Job Characteristics

We hypothesized that highly successful VISTA Volunteers would perceive their jobs as containing certain characteristics conducive to high performance. These factors would relate positively to success regardless of the type of job (service, bridge, catalyst) or the age or sex of the Volunteer. Volunteers would more likely achieve a high performance level on jobs that involve opportunities for utilization of Volunteers' skills, clients that are poor; enough work but not too much; regularly scheduled hours; meaningful assignments and assignments which do not duplicate the work of others.

### Opportunity to Utilize Skills and Need to Feel Competent

Of all the job factors studied, opportunity to utilize skills and abilities relates most significantly to successful performance. Highly successful Volunteers usually report that their jobs allow them considerable leeway to utilize personal skills and abilities. In Table 15 below, we see the proportion of high and low performers when Volunteers feel their jobs offer varying degrees of skill utilization. Sixty-one percent of the Volunteers are rated highly when they perceive their jobs as offering a great deal of opportunity to utilize abilities, while only 19% of the Volunteers are high performers on jobs which offer little or no skill utilization. (Differences are significant at the $P \leq .02$ level). This finding underscores the need to carefully match Volunteer abilities and job requirements.

Table 15. Volunteers' Perceptions of Opportunity to Utilize Skills and Abilities and Performance

(Percent of Total)

| | Opportunity to Utilize Skills and Abilities | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | A Great Deal | Some | Not Much At All |
| High | 61 | 44 | 19 |
| Low | 39 | 56 | 81 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (43) | (52) | (16) |

$X^2 = 8.42$ df = 2 $P \leq .02$

Closely associated with the desire of the Volunteer to utilize personal skills on behalf of the poor, is the need to feel competent for the job. The more a Volunteer feels he/she possesses needed job skills, the better job he is able to do.

Table 16. The Amount of Job Knowledge and Skill Possessed By Volunteer and Performance (Percent of Total)

| Performance Level | Amount of Skills<br>Insufficient | Some | Sufficient |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 3 | 22 | 41 |
| High-Medium | 23 | 16 | 27 |
| Medium-Low | 41 | 32 | 18 |
| Low | 33 | 30 | 14 |

$X^2 = 18.33$ df = 6 $P \leq .01$

The relationship between feelings of competence and performance is one of the more highly significant we have encountered. ($P < .01$) The need to feel competent puts a particular burden on VISTA training. It is our experience that on-the-job training in the agency is spotty and not to be depended upon. Most Volunteers, therefore, must come to their jobs with a considerable reservoir of positive feeling about their ability to handle the VISTA role.

What is particularly noteworthy is the high correlation shown in Table 16 between Volunteers' appraisal of their abilities and the evaluation of ability made by Supervisors in the performance ratings. Volunteers who judged themselves lacking in job skills by and large were judged to perform poorly by their Supervisors. This high correlation gives independent validity to the performance ratings of the Supervisors and is a testimony to the objectivity of the study Volunteers.

### Enough Work and Schedule of Work

Most of the Volunteers in our sample indicated that their jobs provided them with "enough" work to keep busy. For them amount of work as such was not a discriminator of successful performance.

However when Volunteers had "too much" work or "too little" work, their performance was affected. Volunteers who reported they had too much work tended to be high performers,[1] while too little work, as expected, was a correlate of poor performance. (See Table A-5, Appendix A)

The positive effect of a heavy work load is further indicated by another interesting finding. Volunteers who worked more than 40 hours per week (normal agency work week is 37) performed significantly better than Volunteers who were busy only 40 hours or less ($P \leq .10$).

Closely related to the question of amount of available work, is the nature of the work schedule. Some agencies outline a definite schedule of hours and days of work for their Volunteers; others leave such determinations essentially up to the Volunteers and the needs of the job. As expected, in our sample there was greater flexibility on community organization jobs than service-bridge jobs.

---

[1] Among such volunteers, 73% were rated highly as compared to 47% when Volunteers had "enough work" and 31% when they had "too little" work.

A regularly scheduled work week by no means assured high performance in the case of our study Volunteers.

We find a similar proportion of successful Volunteers on jobs without specific work schedules as on "scheduled" assignments. It would appear that more important than scheduled hours or day is the amount of work available, the nature of the job tasks, and opportunities to utilize skills and abilities.

### Poor Clients and Validity of Assignments

The final group of job characteristics involve the nature of VISTA clients and the value of the work assignments available to the Volunteers. VISTA Volunteers choose specifically to work with the disadvantaged and give their services without remuneration. Naturally most expect that clients will be poor, and that the work they do will contribute to the struggle against poverty and will not duplicate what is already being done by other agency staff.

The study Volunteers were asked whether their assignments were meaningful (jobs which needed doing) and whether they saw their work as duplicating efforts of other staff members. The vast majority were satisfied with their jobs on both counts. We cannot, therefore, either substantiate or disprove our assumption that in order to ensure effective performance VISTA jobs must provide meaningful work and no duplication.

We can, however, comment on the relationship of "poor" clients to successful VISTA performance. The following table compares the economic status of the clients with the performance level achieved by the Volunteer (as evaluated by Direct Supervisor).

## Table 17. Status of Clients and Performance

| Performance Level | Poor | Not Poor |
|---|---|---|
| | (Percent of Total) | |
| High | 48 | 36 |
| Low | 52 | 64 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (85) | (22) |

$X^2$ = not significant

As can be seen, economic status of clients is not related to successful performance. Although on first glance this finding seems surprising, there is a plausible explanation. Most agencies sponsoring VISTA Volunteers serve clients who are predominantly poor, so that economic status, as such, is not a factor. In the case of programs serving the mentally ill, the blind, retarded or crippled children clients may come from varying economic backgrounds, but there is an obvious need for services. Volunteers assigned to these programs respond to clients needs and try to give effective service. Whether they succeed or not depends on factors other than the economic status of their clients. However, the nature of clients has some bearing on Volunteer satisfaction with VISTA. As discussed on page 51, when Volunteers work with clients who are not predominantly poor, there is a trend towards less satisfaction.

√

## Relationship of Success in Training to Performance on the Job

Before leaving the subject of job and performance, there is one question which has interested people connected with VISTA for some time. Is there any relationship between the degree of success achieved by a Volunteer in training and his/her performance in the field? Our study offers some interesting data on this subject.[1]

When success in training is contrasted with performance in the field, the following occurs:

Table 18. Training Success by Level of Performance in the Field

| | Training Success (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 62 | 44 | 31 |
| Low | 38 | 56 | 69 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (39) | (43) | (29) |

$X^2 = 7.19$ df = 2 $P \leq .05$

There is a significant relationship between how well a study Volunteer performed in training and his eventual performance as a VISTA Volunteer. ($P \leq .05$). It would, however, be well to repeat this comparison using a larger sample of VISTA Volunteers and a variety of Training Centers before any definitive statement is made about training potential as an accurate indicator of field potential. The Columbia Training staff has gathered full information on each individual before a training evaluation was made. In circumstances where such careful appraisal is not possible, it is doubtful whether as high a correlation between training and field performance will result.

---

[1] As noted, comparisons can be made between success in training (Training Success Index) and field performance (Performance Index) because similar questions were utilized in both performance ratings.

## The VISTA Job and Volunteer Satisfaction

### Type of Vista Job

Performance appears to be influenced by several aspects of job, including nature of job, opportunities to utilize skills and abilities, the amount of work and feelings of competency to perform the required assignments. With respect to Volunteer satisfaction, however, we find that the type of VISTA job is not significantly related to satisfaction. The level of Volunteer satisfaction is similarly high on either service, bridge or catalyst jobs.

At first glance it seems hard to understand why Volunteers, trained for community action, would be as happy on service jobs.[1] To find an answer, we must look to the nature of Volunteer satisfaction. Such satisfaction appears to have at least two important components -- the freedom to do a job and utilize one's skills and abilities and the opportunity to assist poor clients in their struggle to overcome poverty. Both of these needs can be gratified in either community organization or bridge-service jobs.

---

[1] When type of job and performance level were contrasted, we found that Volunteers on catalyst jobs performed better than those on service jobs and noted the consistency of this finding with the goal of Columbia training and the image of VISTA as directly involved in action with the poor.

Thus in field visits, we talked with eminently happy Volunteers on jobs teaching illiterate adults to read; helping first offenders obtain bail on their own recognizance; working with children and parents in Head Start programs; or helping elderly people solves problems of health or finance. Such Volunteers perceived their work as meeting important needs of poor people and as contributing to the fight against poverty. If, in addition, the job provided outlets for personal gratification (use of skills, positive relationships with supervisors, etc. ), the "service" Volunteers were most positive in expressions of satisfaction with their VISTA experience. Occasionally, some would raise nagging doubts about whether their jobs were really "VISTA jobs," but most, at the four-month point, were no longer troubled about the appropriateness of their assignment.

Our experience in the field, plus the findings of this study, convince us that high satisfaction in VISTA can be found on a variety of assignments and by no means requires, for all Volunteers, a community organization job.

## Job Characteristics

### Need to Feel Competent

Among the job attributes most highly related to effective performance are the opportunity to utilize skills and abilities and a Volunteer's feeling of competence with respect to job assignments. A measure of the opportunity to utilize ones skills is included in the Satisfaction Index precluding any separate testing of this factor against satisfaction.

A Volunteer's feeling of possessing sufficient knowledge and skill to perform his/her job can, however, be compared with overall satisfaction level. The resultant findings (see Table 19 below) highlight the importance of a sense of competency to the Volunteer's happiness in VISTA.

Table 19. The Amount of Job Knowledge and Skill Possessed by Volunteer by Satisfaction[1]

| | Amount of Skills (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | Insufficient | Same | Sufficient |
| High | 17 | 14 | 39 |
| Medium | 23 | 43 | 43 |
| Low | 60 | 63 | 18 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (30) | (37) | (44) |

$X^2 = 17.165$ df = 4 $P \leq .002$

Having sufficient knowledge and skill for the job is one of the factors most highly correlated with Volunteer satisfaction ($P \leq .002$). It was also important with respect to successful performance. VISTA training, in the first instance, is an important force in generating needed feelings of competency. But proper placement of Volunteers is also crucial to insure that VISTAs trained for community action are not assigned to service jobs for which they are totally unprepared (or vice versa of course).

---

[1] As perceived by Volunteer.

Enough Work and Schedule of Work

One hypothesis which proved to be correct concerned the relationship of the amount of work available to the Volunteer and degree of satisfaction in VISTA. The greater the amount of work available to the Volunteer, the higher the satisfaction level. Too much work, rather than frightening or overwhelming to the Volunteer, is significantly related to high satisfaction.

Table 20. Amount of Work Available to Volunteer and Volunteer Satisfaction

| Level of Satisfaction | Amount of Work (Percent of Total)<br>Too Much Work | <br>Enough Work | <br>Too Little Work |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 36 | 25 | 13 |
| Medium | 46 | 41 | 18 |
| Low | 18 | 34 | 69 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (11) | (84) | (16) |

$X^2 = 8.86 \quad df = 4 \quad P \leq .06$

The most noteworthy aspect of the above table is the effect of amount of work on the level of dissatisfaction with VISTA. Only 18% of those having "too much" work were dissatisfied with their VISTA experience and about one-third of those having "enough" work expressed low satisfaction, while the proportion of dissatisfied rose above two-thirds, when Volunteers had too little work. Volunteers joined VISTA to help eliminate poverty. And insufficient work is one of the most devastating and frustrating experiences a Volunteer can have.

Two hypotheses with respect to hours and scheduling appeared to be rejected. There is no significant relationship between satisfaction and whether Volunteers worked less or more than 40 hours per week. Similarly, a job with regularly scheduled hours is no more likely to produce increased satisfaction than is one in which the hours are flexible and the scheduling left primarily to the Volunteer.

## Clients That Are Poor And Validity Of Assignment

Most study Volunteers evaluated their assignments as meaningful. They felt their efforts did not duplicate to any extent work done by other staff. It is, therefore, impossible to comment on hypotheses relating these job attributes to Volunteer satisfaction.

With respect to economic status of clients, there were sufficient differences to allow for a statistical comparison (See Table 21 below). When clients are not poor, Volunteers are somewhat less likely to be satisfied with VISTA.

Table 21. Economic Status of Clients By Volunteer Satisfaction
(Percent of Total)

| Level of Satisfaction | Poor | Not Poor |
|---|---|---|
| High | 22 | 27 |
| Medium | 43 | 23 |
| Low | 35 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (85) | (22) |

$X^2 = 2.92$   $df = 2$   $P \leq .23$

Although the above table indicates no significant difference in proportion of highly satisfied Volunteers depending on economic status of clients, differences arise in proportions of mediumly satisfied and, most particularly, in proportions of low satisfaction. This factor apparently operates primarily in the negative -- if clients are not poor, there will be a greater tendency for Volunteer frustration and disaffection with VISTA.

## Summary and Contrast

The relationship of the VISTA job to performance and satisfaction was approached in two ways. First we studied the type of VISTA job, (as evidenced by the tasks performed) to ascertain whether Volunteers on service, bridge or community organization assignments were more effective or more highly satisfied. Taking into account the image of VISTA and the community action training given the Volunteers at Columbia, we hypothesized that greater success and satisfaction would be found on community organization jobs. This hypothesis proved only partially correct. Volunteers on community organization jobs did, indeed, perform significantly better than did Volunteers on service or bridge jobs. But, much to our surprise, there was no significant difference in the level of satisfaction found on the three types of VISTA jobs.

To understand why type of job and level of satisfaction is unrelated we must turn to the nature of Volunteer satisfaction. Two important ingredients appear to be involved -- the chance to do a job and utilize one's skills and the opportunity to assist clients in their struggles against poverty. These Volunteer needs apparently can be equally gratified on service or bridge assignments as well as on jobs involving community organization. There is an interesting relationship between age and effectiveness of performance on catalyst jobs. Younger Volunteers (under 22)[1] are much more likely to be highly effective on community organization jobs than are older Volunteers (22 years or more); while the older Volunteer performs somewhat better on service-bridge assignments. The fluidity of expectations and job demands associated with community organization may be easier for younger Volunteers and be an important factor in their success on such assignments.

The job of the Volunteer was also examined to determine the job attributes associated with successful performance and high satisfaction. Of all the job factors studied, opportunity to utilize skills and abilities" relates most significantly to performance. Highly successful Volunteers usually report that their jobs allow them considerable leeway to utilize personal abilities.[2]

Also significantly related to high performance is the Volunteer's feeling of competency to handle the demands of the job. Volunteers who feel they lack the necessary knowledge and skills are more apt to be rated as poor performers by their supervisors. This need to feel competent is also closely associated with high Volunteer satisfaction, underscoring the crucial need for full and adequate VISTA training.

---

[1] Age and education are closely related in our sample and most of the younger Volunteers are college dropouts.

[2] This factor cannot be related to level of success as it is one of the component parts of the Success Index.

The findings indicate further, the positive affect on both performance and satisfaction of a heavy work load. Volunteers who worked more than 40 hours per week performed significantly better than Volunteers busy 40 hours or less. Similarly VISTAs who reported having "too much" work tended to be high performers while "too little" work was definitely associated with low performance.

The amount of available work was also positively related to Volunteer satisfaction. Too much work, rather than frightening or overwhelming the Volunteers, was usually associated with high satisfaction. Volunteers join VISTA to help eliminate poverty, and the more opportunity they have to become involved on behalf of clients, the better they perform and the happier they appear to be.

A majority of the study Volunteers worked for agencies serving only poor clients, but about 25% worked with client populations drawn from all walks of life. The socio-economic status of clients was unrelated to the level of Volunteer performance, but it did affect satisfaction with VISTA. Apparently once Volunteers become involved with people in need, they attempt to perform to the best of their ability. But when clients are not poor, Volunteers are somewhat less likely to be satisfied with their VISTA experience.

Among the study Volunteers, there was a highly significant positive relationship between their performance in training and the level of performance achieved in the field.

# SUPERVISION

## Introduction

Many people who have worked with Volunteers, both in VISTA and in other agencies, feel that adequate supervision is essential for successful Volunteer performance. One of the major concerns of this study is to test this proposition in practice with a typical group of urban VISTA Volunteers.

We define supervision, herein, as the process whereby a selected staff member of a Sponsoring Agency assumes responsibility for a VISTA Volunteer and on a continual basis assists this Volunteer in the defining and carrying out his/her VISTA assignment. Williamson notes that such supervision is a "dynamic enabling process by which individual workers are helped by a designated staff member to make the best use of their knowledge and skills and to improve their abilities so that they do their jobs more effectively with increasing satisfaction to themselves and to the agency."[1]

In urban VISTA the process of supervision involves a constellation of several distinct factors each contributing to the effectiveness of the total process. In the first instance, there is the time component. How much supervisory time is available to the Volunteer? How often do Supervisor and Volumteer meet? Is the Supervisor readily accessible when needed?

---

[1] Williamson, Margaret, Supervision - New Patterns and Process, New York, Association Press, 1965, pp. 19-20.

Then there is the mode of given supervision. How close or loose is the supervision? Who defines the major tasks? Who determines details of execution? Does the Volunteer feel he/she has sufficient opportunity to initiate and carry through ideas on his own in response to client needs?

Still another aspect is the nature of the supervisory relationship. Is it warm, supportive? Do both parties perceive it as having a high degree of mutuality?

And last, we have the feelings of the supervised person about the competence of the Supervisor and the effectiveness of the assistance given. Does the Volunteer consider his Supervisor technically proficient, having sufficient understanding of the poor and their needs? How generally pleased is he/she with his Supervisor and the supervision received to-date?

In analyzing the relationship between supervision and Volunteer performance and satisfaction, we have looked at each of these components separately. In this way, the global term supervision is narrowed and defined operationally. More importantly, it is possible to isolate the essential aspects of the supervisory process insofar as VISTA is concerned.

## Hypotheses

Specifically we hypothesized the following relationships between the components of supervision and Volunteer performance and satisfaction:

... VISTA Volunteers meeting frequently with Supervisors (at least three times per week) will perform better and be more satisfied.

... Volunteers receiving moderately close supervision will be most successful and satisfied.[1]

... VISTA Volunteers will perform better and be more satisfied if Supervisors are supportive and a warm personal relationship exists between both parties.

When Volunteers feel positively about their Supervisors and the quality of supervision received, their performance will be enhanced and they will be more satisfied.

Indicators

Questions pertaining to the various aspects of supervision mentioned previously were included in the four month interviews held with all study Volunteers and their Direct Supervisors. Responses were intercorrelated and we constructed three cumulative scales[2] each pertaining to an independent aspect of supervision as follows:

Mode of Supervision - an indicator of the closeness or looseness of supervision and the amount of Volunteer autonomy. Principle component is degree of control in decision-making by Supervisor and Volunteer respectively. This index is based on Supervisors' responses. Index range - close, moderately close, loose supervision.

---

[1] Moderately close supervision infers joint Supervisor-Volunteer decision-making with respect to tasks and details of execution and reasonable autonomy for Volunteers to put ideas into operation.

[2] For scales, items included and scoring, see Appendix B.

Supportiveness of Supervisor - a description of the nature of the Supervisor-Volunteer relationship and the degree of supportiveness in it. Implicit in this concept are such factors as aid, comfort, sustenance, intimacy and, to a considerable degree, the Supervisor's assumption of surrogate parent role. This index is based on responses of Volunteers. Range - high, high-medium, medium-low and low support.

Satisfaction with Supervision - a measure of Volunteer satisfaction with supervision received to date. Important to this concept is appraisal of competence of Supervisor with respect to technical ability and understanding of poor. Based on responses of Volunteers. Index range - high, medium, low satisfaction.

Data on the amount of supervision (frequency of contact in a normal week) were obtained both from Supervisors and Volunteers. There was a high degree of correlation between the responses of both groups.

## The Nature of VISTA Supervision

Before examining the impact of the several aspects of supervision on Volunteer performance and satisfaction, we would like to make a few descriptive comments on the supervision received by the 111 study Volunteers in urban VISTA.

Each VISTA Sponsor is required to assign a member of its staff to act as supervisor for the Volunteer. When the agency is small, the Director frequently serves as Supervisor. In larger agencies the supervisor is generally the head of a unit or sub-branch of the agency. The study Volunteers were supervised by a total of 77 Direct Supervisors.[1] These Supervisors, evenly divided between men and women, were comparatively young. (Almost three quarters were under 40 years of age and one-third were under 30.) The majority had some graduate training; 40% in social work and about 20% in education. By and large the Supervisors were in the upper administrative echelons of their respective agencies.

Volunteers holding service or bridge jobs rated their Supervisors more highly (on the satisfaction with Supervision Scale) than did the Volunteers on community organization assignments. (Difference was significant at the $P \leq .04$ level). Perhaps this says something about the difficulty of giving supervision to Volunteers engaged in community organization. Our visits to Sponsoring Agencies indicated that in many cases community organization was a new concept for both the Sponsoring Agency and to the professional staff. Many of the Supervisors were themselves experimenting with duties, lines of responsibility and appropriate techniques of work in community organization.

The age of the Volunteer, however, did not affect evaluation of supervision. Younger Volunteers (18 to 21 years of age) were as apt to be enthusiastic about their Supervisors as were older Volunteers (22 and over).

The mode of supervision (closeness or looseness on the Mode of Supervision Scale) and the amount of supervisory support (on the Support of Supervisor Scale) were not related to any particular type of job nor to Volunteers of any particular age. We find that Volunteers on bridge or service jobs were no more closely supervised than were community organizers. Decisions on assignments and details of task execution appeared to be dependent on the particular philosophy of the Supervisor and the demands on supervisory time.

---

[1] Several Supervisors were responsible for more than one Volunteer.

Similarly younger Volunteers received no greater support from Supervisors than did older Volunteers and high or low support was as likely to be available on service jobs as on catalyst jobs.

## Findings

### Supervision and Performance

To what extent do such factors as the amount of supervision, closeness of supervision, the supportiveness of supervision and satisfaction with supervision relate to success as a VISTA Volunteer? A positive relationship between one or all of these factors may well suggest important administrative decisions for VISTA Washington and the various VISTA Sponsoring Agencies.

#### Amount of Supervision

Among the Volunteers in our sample, there were no appreciable differences in the amount of supervision received. Most Volunteers met with their Supervisors at least three or more times per week and 95% percent felt their Supervisors were easily reachable in time of need. As a result, the time factor is inoperable with respect to our sample, and we can make no statement regarding the frequency of supervision and either Volunteer performance or satisfaction.

Our experience with urban VISTA indicates that considerable supervisory time is available to the Volunteers. It may well be that in rural or migrant VISTA where Volunteers work apart from their Sponsoring Agency, frequent meetings with supervisors are impossible. Under such circumstances the relevance of the amount of supervision to Volunteer performance and satisfaction may well be different.

## Mode of Supervision

Decision-making with respect to job tasks and details of execution is handled differently by different VISTA Supervisors. As measured by the mode of Supervision Scale, supervision was close in the case of 40 Volunteers. Supervisors exercised close control and made most decisions themselves; Volunteer autonomy was at a minimum.

In the case of 50 Volunteers, supervision was moderately close. Decision-making was generally a joint process and Volunteers received considerable leeway, within broadly specified limits, to put their own ideas into practice.

Twenty-one Volunteers in the sample experienced loose supervision. Supervisors generally had a "hands off policy" and, except in case of severe difficulty, decision-making was left pretty much up to the Volunteer.

We hypothesized that Volunteers receiving moderately close supervision would perform better than Volunteers who were either closely supervised or loosely supervised. Our hypothesis is not supported by the facts - see Table 22 below. To our surprise there was no appreciable difference in the performance levels achieved under varying modes of supervision.

Table 22. Mode of Supervision and Performance

| Performance Level | Mode of Supervision (Percent of Total) Close | Moderately Close | Loose |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 45 | 46 | 52 |
| Low | 55 | 54 | 48 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (40) | (50) | (21) |

$X^2$ = not significant

The absence of relationship between mode of supervision and level of performance holds true on all types of VISTA jobs. There is apparently no one appropriate mode of supervision for all VISTA Volunteers, and the choice can best be left to the determination of the individual Supervisor and Volunteer in the individual job situation.

### Supportiveness of Supervision

In line with our hypothesis, we find that a high level of performance is significantly related to a high degree of supportiveness on the part of the Supervisor. The following table is illustrative of this relationship. In those cases in which supervision was perceived as highly supportive[1] Volunteers performed considerably better. (Differences are significant at the $P < .01$ level)

---

[1] A high rating on the Supportiveness of Supervision scale infers that a Supervisor can be depended upon for help when needed and that a close personal relationship exists between the Volunteer and his/her Supervisor.

Table 23. Degree of Supportiveness of Supervision By Level of Performance

| Performance Level | Degree of Supportiveness (Percent of Total) | |
|---|---|---|
| | High-High Medium | Medium Low-Low |
| High | 58 | 33 |
| Low | 42 | 67 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (62) | (49) |

$X^2 = 8.54$ df = 1 $P \leq .01$

It is important to remember that the perceptions of supervisory supportiveness are those of the Volunteers, while the evaluation of performance is made by the Supervisor. The independence of these two sets of ratings precludes a halo effect and adds validity to the finding of relationship between high supportiveness and high performance.

A significant positive relationship between ability to perform and feelings of support from a supervisor are understandable given the nature of the VISTA role. Young Volunteers, far from family and friends are thrust into unknown urban ghettos. With relatively little training, they assume job responsibilities often carried by beginning professionals.[1] Without a trained supervisor to lean on, to have as a close friend, to turn to for immediate help, the VISTA experience could prove utterly overwhelming. It is our belief that the presence of supportive supervision can make reasonable Volunteer success possible. Our findings appear to bear this out.

---

[1] Cantor, Tomorrow Is Today, pp. 113-115.

The need to feel close to and supported by one's Supervisor remains constant no matter what type of VISTA assignment. Although high supportiveness is positively related to high performance on all types of jobs, the relationship is particularly crucial in the case of community organization jobs.

Table 24. Relationship Between Job, Degree of Support And Level of Performance

| | Supportiveness of Supervisor (Percent of Total) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Community Organization Jobs | | Service-Bridge Jobs | |
| Performance Level | High Support | Low Support | High Support | Low Support |
| High | 71 | 39 | 54 | 31 |
| Low | 29 | 61 | 46 | 69 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (14) | (13) | (48) | (36) |

In the above table we see that when a Volunteer engaged in community organization receives high support from his Supervisor, his chances of superior performance are even more sharply increased than is the case with a "service or bridge" Volunteer. With high support, 71% of the catalyst Volunteers were high performers, 29% low performers. On bridge-service jobs, high support only resulted in 54% high performers, as opposed to 46% low performers, graphically illustrating the special importance of supportive supervision on community organization assignments.

## Satisfaction with Supervision

And finally, we hypothesized that high Volunteer satisfaction with Supervisor and supervision would be positively related to successful performance. To test this assumption we can compare in the following table the proportion of high performers at three levels of satisfaction with supervisors.[1]

Table 25. Volunteers' Satisfaction With Supervision and Performance

| | Satisfaction With Supervision (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Performance | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 57 | 44 | 36 |
| Low | 43 | 56 | 64 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (44) | (36) | (31) |

$X^2 = 3.43$ df = 2 $P \leq .20$

Although the difference between proportion of high performers at the three satisfaction levels are not statistically significant, ($P \leq .20$), a definite trend can be seen. As the degree of satisfaction with Supervisor declines, the proportion of high performers likewise declines,[1] suggesting a relationship between satisfaction with Supervisor and performance.

---

[1] As measured on the Satisfaction with Supervision Scale.

However, this relationship is considerably weaker than was found between degree of supportiveness and performance. It would appear that some VISTA Volunteers can function well in spite of negative feeling about supervision. But, if Volunteers feel alone and unsupported, only the rare Volunteer can perform at a high level.

In community organization jobs a Volunteer works directly in the neighborhood with the poor and is more likely to be fulfilling the VISTA role as defined in training. Perhaps on such jobs feelings about supervision make less difference in ability to perform. To test this, in Table 26 we compared the proportion of high performers, according to satisfaction with Supervisor, for catalyst and service jobs separately.

Table 26. Relationship Between Type of Job, Satisfaction With Supervisor and Performance

| | Degree of Satisfaction (Percent of Total) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Service-Bridge Job | | | Catalyst Job | | |
| Performance Level | High | Medium | Low | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 56 | 38 | 29 | 60 | 58 | 50 |
| Low | 44 | 62 | 71 | 40 | 42 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (39) | (24) | (21) | (5) | (12) | (10) |

---

[1] As noted previously because of the small size of sample we prefer to report relationships in which a definite trend appears even if the Chi Square results are significant at a level higher than $P \leq .10$. There is always a danger of rejecting too quickly trends which may have more significance with a larger sample.

In the above table we see that on all jobs the proportion of high performers declines as satisfaction with Supervisors decreases. But there is a much sharper decline in the case of service-bridge jobs, suggesting that on such assignments Volunteers are even more sensitive to feelings about supervision. It must be remembered that service jobs tend to be more highly structured and that such jobs are frequently regarded by Volunteers as less compatible with VISTA ideals. It is easy to see why a good supervisor is so important.

## Supervision and Volunteer Satisfaction

In relating the major components of supervision to performance, we found that supportiveness of supervision and satisfaction with supervision are positively correlated with successful performance. The mode of supervision (close or loose) on the other hand does not affect performance.

Our interest now lies in the impact of supervision on satisfaction. Do all or several of the components of supervision, isolated in this report, significantly affect a Volunteer's feeling of satisfaction with VISTA? To take an extreme case, is it possible for a Volunteer to be highly pleased with his/her VISTA experience and yet perceive his Supervisor as non-supportive, too restrictive or lacking in technical competence or understanding of the poor? The answer is a resounding no! How a Volunteer feels about his Supervisor and supervision strongly influences his perceptions of his total VISTA experience.

## Supportiveness and Satisfaction With Supervisor

Just as supportiveness of Supervisor contributes positively to high performance, a similar effect is found with respect to Volunteer satisfaction. The more intimate Volunteers are with their Supervisors and the more supportive they perceive them to be, the greater is the chance of high Volunteer satisfaction with VISTA. (The relationship is statistically significant at the $P \leq .04$ level. See Appendix A, Table A-6). Similarly, the higher the Volunteers rate their Supervisors[1] and the supervision received, the higher their overall satisfaction with VISTA. (Significant at the $P \leq .05$ level. See Appendix A, Table A-7).

The type of VISTA job in no way alters the positive relationships noted between Volunteer satisfaction and supportiveness of supervision or satisfaction and positive feelings about supervision.

## Mode of Supervision

We found no relationship between mode of supervision and successful performance and concluded that close or loose supervision is best left to the determination of the individual Supervisor and Volunteer. An essentially similar conclusion must be drawn with respect to the impact of mode of supervision on satisfaction.

In the following table, we compare the mode of supervision (close, moderate, loose on the Mode of Supervision Scale) with degree of VISTA satisfaction.

---

[1] Particularly in the areas of technical competence and understanding the poor.

Table 27. Mode of Supervision by Volunteer Satisfaction

| Level of Satisfaction | Mode of Supervision (Percent of Total)<br>Close | Moderately Close | Loose |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 15 | 26 | 38 |
| Medium | 40 | 40 | 29 |
| Low | 45 | 34 | 33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (40) | (50) | (21) |

$X^2 = 4.85$ df = 4 $P \leq .50$

We find clear evidence that overly close supervision results in restriction of Volunteer satisfaction. Thus among the 40 "closely" supervised Volunteers, only 15% report high VISTA satisfaction, while 45% express low satisfaction. Considering the average age of VISTA Volunteers and the relative freedom of previous academic life, it is not surprising that so high a proportion register dissatisfaction when their autonomy of action is severely limited or when decision-making rests too heavily in the hands of supervisors.

With respect to the 71 other Volunteers, however, who received "moderately close" or "loose supervision" the picture is by no means as clear. As supervision becomes looser, Volunteer satisfaction rises somewhat. Thus when supervision is moderate, 26% of the Volunteers are highly satisfied, while under loose supervision the proportion of highly satisfied rises to a high point of 38%.[1] But one can hardly recommend loose supervision for all VISTA

---

[1] Although a trend, these findings are not statistically significant.

Volunteers when we find that only 38% of the loosely supervised Volunteers are highly satisfied, while 33% express low VISTA satisfaction. It would appear that loose supervision is fine for some Volunteers and they are happy with it. But almost as large a group cannot handle the freedom and dissatisfaction with VISTA results. This dichotomy suggests that there is no general rule for the appropriate mode of supervision for all Volunteers. Because each case is essentially idiosyncratic, it would be wise to allow individual need rather than organizational dictum to govern the mode of supervision afforded VISTA Volunteers in a given situation. However, the negative relationship found between "close" supervision and Volunteer satisfaction should be considered a warning against too restrictive control over VISTA Volunteers.

## Summary and Contrast

We have studied VISTA performance and satisfaction under different conditions of supervision. Among the aspects of supervision covered were the frequency of supervision, the mode of supervision, the degree of supportiveness afforded by the supervisor and Volunteer feelings of satisfaction with Supervisor and supervision received to date. Two factors emerge as highly significant with respect to both performance and satisfaction. The warmer the Supervisory relationship and the more supportive the Volunteers perceive their Supervisors to be, the higher the level of performance and the greater the satisfaction with VISTA. Similarly Volunteers rating their supervisors as highly competent are far more likely to perform satisfactorily and be highly satisfied. These relationships hold true both on catalyst and service-bridge jobs, although high satisfaction with supervision is perhaps even more important in the case of highly structured service-bridge jobs.

The mode of supervision -- be it close, moderately close or loose -- does not appear to significantly affect either performance or satisfaction. Mode of supervision is an idiosyncratic matter best left up to individual Supervisors and Volunteers. However there is one exception to be noted -- supervision that is too close or too restrictive tends to severely diminish Volunteer satisfaction.

## THE SPONSORING AGENCY

### Introduction

At the end of training, all selected VISTA Volunteers are assigned to a Sponsoring Agency under whose auspices they work with the poor during their service year. Although VISTA, through its Regional Offices, continues to maintain limited contact with the Volunteers, the main organizational focus shifts to the Sponsoring Agency. The placement of the Volunteer within the agency framework (including kind of work and Supervisor), hours of work, rules of appropriate behavior, place of residence and even nature of allowable involvement with clients rest within the Sponsor's domain. The kind of agency, its structure and readiness to accept VISTA Volunteers, and the provisions it makes for on-going supervision and support can immeasurably alter the well-being of the Volunteer and his chances of performing a useful and satisfying service to the poor. Particularly in urban poverty, where agencies tend to be better organized and more highly professionalized, the interaction of Volunteer with agency may prove crucial. It is, therefore, not surprising that several hypotheses should emerge from the previously descriptive study of the VISTA Research Project[1] concerning the impact of agency on Volunteer performance and satisfaction. It is our hope, in testing these hypotheses, to contribute to the development of criteria for the selection of an effective VISTA Sponsoring Agency.

---

[1] Cantor, op. cit.

## Hypotheses

All attempts to arrive at a classification scheme for the 43 urban agencies, studied here, proved impossible. There was constant overlap from agency to agency. Educational institutions were involved in organizing ghetto communities. Traditional service agencies were experimenting with out-reach programs, while the large community action programs offered as much direct service as community organization. Similarly, locale of operation (city-wide, one neighborhood, several neighborhoods) failed to discriminate between agencies, while such factors as size of staff, degree of professionalism, and even number of clients could not always be reliably determined. We, therefore, soon abandoned any attempt at classification and concentrated instead on isolating factors of operation, environment or attitude generic to all agencies. Three areas emerged and hypotheses were developed within each area. The areas and the relevant hypotheses follow.

### Attitude Towards Clients

VISTA Volunteers, it must be remembered, give up a year of their lives to work and live with the poor and their efforts are dedicated to helping clients overcome poverty. It is logical to expect that Volunteers will be concerned with and sensitive to the attitudes of their Sponsoring Agencies towards clients, particularly the poor. We, therefore, hypothesized that VISTA Volunteers will perform better and be more satisfied in agencies perceived to be:

. . . concerned with the needs and welfare of the poor

. . . committed to their clients

## Utilization of VISTA Volunteers

A second important agency dimension is the attitude of the Sponsor towards VISTA and the utilization of VISTA Volunteers. We hypothesize that Volunteers will be more successful and more satisfied if agencies:

. . . make the fullest use of VISTA Volunteers

. . . prepare ahead for Volunteers

. . . give training to Volunteers when they first arrive in the agency

Such a positive approach to Volunteers would be seen as evidence of agency commitment to VISTA and to the positive possibilities of VISTA service to the poor.

## Agency Structure and Organization

Since the Sponsoring Agency is omnipresent in the lives of most VISTA Volunteers, the impact of the agency as a living operative organism can be considerable. The youthfulness of most of the study Volunteers and their relative inexperience with structure considerably increase the importance of factors commonly associated with organization. Specifically, we hypothesized that Volunteers will perform better and evidence greater satisfaction in agencies that:

. . . are fluid and open to new ideas

. . . evidence some degree of organization and structure, but are not over-structured or too highly organized

. . . are not excessively bureaucratic

. . . have a close, warm-knit feeling between the various levels of staff.

## Indicators

To measure the various agency factors outlined in the foregoing hypotheses, we relied solely on the perceptions of the Volunteers. Not only were independent measures of agency structure, commitment, values, etc., not available, but they did not seem pertinent to the purposes of our study. Independent appraisals (be they by government or behavioral scientist) do not really influence the amount of effort a Volunteer will expand or how happy he is. What matters to the Volunteer (and what we are interested in determining) are the kinds of thing he/she perceives which make for an effective placement for a VISTA Volunteer.

To gather Volunteer perceptions of agencies we presented each Volunteer with a series of true-false statements about agencies. (See Appendix for statements). The item responses were intercorrelated and where possible cumulative scales were constructed. Four such scales were derived as follows:[1]

> Agency Concern With Poor Scale. A measure of the interest and involvement of the agency with the poor. Includes evidence of warmth towards clients and depth of concern with problems of poverty. Agencies classified as having high, medium, low concern.
>
> Staff Commitment Scale. A measure of the enthusiasm and dedication of agency staff towards stated goals of the agency and towards clients. Agencies classified as having high, medium or low commitment.

---

[1] See Appendix B for the indices used in this section, the items included and methods of scoring.

Degree of Professionalism Scale. A measure of the cohesiveness and closeness of agency staff and extent to which they work as unit. The issue here is the extent of professionalism and the sharpness of demarcation between the various echelons of staff, particularly professional and non-professional workers. Agencies classified as excessively, mediumly, minimally professionalized.

Single items were utilized to tap the perception of the Volunteer with respect to the amount of bureaucracy in the agency, the tightness of structure, the openness of the agency to new ideas, the utilization of the Volunteer and the extent of agency preparation and on-the-job training.

## Description of Sponsoring Agencies

At the completion of training the study Volunteers were sent to 43 urban Sponsoring Agencies located in 17 states and all regions of the country. These agencies were fairly typical of all urban agencies utilized by VISTA at the time. Included were several large multi-faced community action agencies, numerous settlement houses, educational institutions (including the Boards of Education of several major cities), health and rehabilitation services, one Department of Welfare, several Parishes and neighborhood improvement associations, and three Bail Bond Projects.

The largest block of study Volunteers were assigned to the multi-facet community action programs. The next largest group of Volunteers were placed in settlement houses, followed by those in educational institutions. Slightly more than half the Volunteers went to these three types of agencies.

Half of the agencies are relatively new outgrowths of the War on Poverty. The remaining half are older, more established educational and social welfare agencies, and a sizeable group have been in their communities anywhere from 30 to 60 years. Some serve only the people in the immediate vicinity, others have a city-wide clientele. The sample includes some marginally professional agencies (such as block associations) and some highly professional organizations (such as casework agencies, boards of education and state hospitals). In terms of the number of clients served the size range is tremendous, from less than 250 to more than 100,000. The agencies are primarily engaged in giving direct services to clients or in social action. With one exception, they were not involved in therapeutic intervention.

## Findings

### Agency and Performance

#### Attitude Towards Clients

Commitment to the poor and the eradication of poverty in this country are basic to VISTA as it is currently defined. One would expect, therefore, that VISTA Volunteers would be most sensitive to the attitudes and actions of those around them towards the disadvantaged and their needs. We hypothesized that sponsoring agencies which give only "lip service" to meeting the needs of the urban poor will not be good placements for intense, highly idealistic VISTA Volunteers. Our findings indicate that this is so. Of all the aspects of an agency, VISTA Volunteers react most strongly to the amount of dedication and devotion to the poor they observe around them. Agencies which are perceived as highly involved with and committed to poverty clients contain the highest proportion of highly successful and highly satisfied Volunteers.

We see in Table 28 which follows that the greater the agency concern for the poor[1] (as perceived by the Volunteers), the higher the performance rating of the Volunteers. (Differences are significant at the $P \leq .01$ level).

Table 28. Degree of Agency Concern With Poor and Performance

| | Agency Concern With Poor (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 67 | 44 | 30 |
| Low | 33 | 56 | 70 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (33) | (45) | (33) |

$X^2 = 8.94$ df = 2 $P \leq .01$

In agencies rated highly on the Concern With Poor Scale, 67% of the Volunteers are evaluated by Supervisors as performing at the high level while when Volunteers feel their agencies are minimally concerned with the poor, the proportion of high performance drops to 30%. As revealed in interview material, Volunteers who feel that the Sponsor for whom they work is not committed to the cause of the poor tend to become frustrated and cynical and as a result their effectiveness is severely limited. By and large VISTA Volunteers are acting upon a reservoir of idealism and commitment to principles; it is very difficult for them to accept as Sponsors agencies any less idealistic or less committed than themselves.

---

[1] Agencies that score highly on this scale are perceived as being very involved with the poor, sympathetic to clients, trying to do a job for the poor despite problems, dealing with some of most pressing problems in the community and evidencing a warm feeling between staff and poor clients.

The type of job held by the Volunteer in no way minimizes the crucial importance given to this question of concern and commitment to the poor. Volunteers on community organization jobs naturally have difficulty performing if their agency is not seen as deeply involved, but VISTAS on bridge and service jobs have just as much difficulty. Although concern with the poor is a crucial agency requirement among all Volunteers, older Volunteers (22 and older) are even more sensitive to this point than younger Volunteers. (See Appendix A, Table A-10).

Another aspect of agency interaction with clients is the enthusiasm and dedication of the agency staff in carrying out agency goals and program. VISTA Volunteers work alongside paid staff and cannot help but be affected by their attitudes towards program and clients. We, therefore, hypothesized that VISTA Volunteers would perform better if they worked in agencies they perceived to have highly committed staffs.[1] Interestingly enough this hypothesis is not supported by the facts. As can be seen in the table below,

---

[1] Agencies receiving high scores are perceived to have staff which evidence a sense of enthusiasm and commitment, a strong sense of purpose with everyone pitching in to get jobs done, and as much enthusiasm and dedication as Volunteers.

Volunteers perform no better in agencies with highly enthusiastic and dedicated staffs, than in agencies where they rate the staff as mediumly or even minimally involved and committed.

Table 29. Degree of Staff Commitment and Performance

| Performance Level | Volunteer Perception of Staff Commitment (Percent of Total) High | Medium | Low |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 46 | 52 | 45 |
| Low | 54 | 48 | 55 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (46) | (25) | (40) |

$X^2$ = not significant

It is hard to explain why performance is not more influenced by amount of staff commitment. VISTA Volunteers have difficulty functioning in an agency whose goals they find incompatible. But they can apparently surmount a situation in which they perceive some agency staff as less dedicated than they are. Apparently, given a meaningful job assignment, the Volunteers will function to their capacity regardless of limitations they may perceive in agency staff. The fact that they are only in the agency for one year also may make it easier for them to accept limitations they perceive. However, there is a highly significant relationship between the level of Volunteer satisfaction and perceptions of staff dedication and enthusiasm. This suggests that the Volunteers are not completely unaffected by the degree of staff commitment they see around them.

## Utilization of VISTA Volunteers

Effective utilization of Volunteers by Sponsoring Agencies was another area hypothesized as influencing performance and satisfaction. Considered particularly pertinent was the willingness of a Sponsor to provide Volunteers with work suited to the VISTA role (not merely extended manpower for routine jobs), as well as advance preparation prior to Volunteer arrival and provision for on the job training.

Our findings indicate a significant connection between the utilization of Volunteers to their fullest advantage and success on the job. If an agency is perceived to utilize VISTA Volunteers only as "more manpower to carry out routine jobs," Volunteer performance will tend to be considerably lower. In cases where the agency offers Volunteers assignments geared to the specialness of the VISTA role[1] performance is significantly higher.

---

[1] Although this is a hard concept to define, conversations with Supervisors and Volunteers indicate that VISTAs are particularly effective in outreaching roles. Because Volunteers live in the neighborhood and are not professionals, social distance is minimized and Volunteers are particularly successful in establishing informal peer relationships with clients. This enhances their ability to serve as communicators between the world of the ghetto and the agency for whom they work. For fuller discussion, see Cantor, Vista Volunteers and the Poor, A Special Kind of Helping Relationship.

Table 30. Agency Use Of Volunteers and Performance

| Performance Level | Agency Use as Perceived by Volunteers (Percent of Total)<br>Used As Routine Manpower | <br>Used to Fullest Advantage |
|---|---|---|
| High | 32 | 53 |
| Low | 68 | 47 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (34) | (77) |

$X^2 = 4.14$   df = 1   $P \leq .04$

Again, we find older Volunteers more sensitive than younger Volunteers to the way their agencies utilize VISTA Volunteers. (See Appendix A, Table A-11).

Volunteer perception of the sufficiency of agency advance preparation for Volunteers and the availability of training on arrival did not relate to job performance. Any deficiencies in these areas were apparently compensated for during the first four months of service and did not materially effect how well Volunteers performed.

## Agency Structure and Organization

In studies of the functioning of organizations one expects to find negative relationships between staff morale and performance and such factors as excessive structure, bureaucracy, professionalism and closure to new ideas. The less bureaucratic, less highly organized, the more fluid and close knit the agency the better, we hypothesized the Volunteers would perform. A comparison of performance and the Volunteer perceptions of their agencies on the several related scales indicates that our hypotheses are not altogether correct.

### Openness to New Ideas

Only eight agencies were seen by their Volunteers to be completely closed to new ideas; 51 agencies were perceived as somewhat open to new ideas while 51 agencies were judged to be very open and receptive to new ideas. Table 31 relates the agencies' openness to new ideas with performance of the Volunteers.

Table 31. Volunteer Evaluation of Openness Of Agency to New Ideas and Performance

| | Agency Openness to New Ideas (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Very Open | Somewhat Open | Not At All Open |
| High | 45 | 53 | 13 |
| Low | 55 | 47 | 87 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (51) | (51) | (8) |

$X^2$ = not significant

The Chi Square test indicates no significant differences for the table as a whole. However, we see a sharp drop in performance when Volunteers perceive their agencies as "not open" at all to new ideas, (as opposed to agencies which are open to some degree or more). Unfortunately, our sample of "closed" agencies[1] is very small so that this finding can only be considered tentative. But it appears that VISTA Volunteers find it very difficult to function effectively under conditions completely unconducive to the free flow of ideas. However, whether an agency is "somewhat" or "very open" apparently does not matter, as long as there is some exchange of ideas among various levels of staff and Volunteers.

This suggested relationship between low performance and "closed" agencies is understandable in terms of the VISTA role of gadfly and innovator in an agency. Although the main role of a VISTA Volunteer is conceptualized in training as helper of the poor, Volunteers are encouraged to present to Sponsors suggestions for new programs and ways of doing things. Ninety percent of the Study Volunteers came forth with one or more new ideas according to Supervisors. It is this outlet for free expression that is at stake in agencies "not at all open" to new ideas.

### Degree of Organization

It is of course impossible for a Sponsoring Agency to function in the absence of some structure or table of organization. But a proliferation of rules and regulations, lines of authority too rigidly drawn and too much organization can stultify a program and undermine staff effectiveness. We, therefore, hypothesized that VISTA Volunteers would perform best in agencies they perceived to have a moderate degree of structure.

---

[1] Because of the small number of closed agencies, dichotomizing the data between "open" and "closed" is not helpful.

The degree of organization was felt to be particularly pertinent to younger Volunteers many of whom were working within an organizational feamework for the first time and who tended to be philosophically anti-establishment.

When the performance of the Volunteers is looked at in terms of degree of agency organization[1] no significant relationship is found. See Table 32 below. Although some Volunteers undoubtedly had difficulty with structure, poorly rated Volunteers are as apt to be found in loosely structured agencies as in highly structured ones. Our hypothesis that a medium degree of structure would be most conducive to high performance also proved unfounded. Appropriate degree of structure is apparently an individual matter and no pattern of organization will assure high performance for all Volunteers.

Table 32. Degree of Structure and Performance

| | Agency Perceived As (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Highly Structured | Moderately Structured | Loosely Structured |
| High | 48 | 44 | 49 |
| Low | 52 | 56 | 51 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (27) | (45) | (39) |

$X^2$ = not significant

---

[1] Volunteers' perceptions, as are all measures of agency utilized in this section.

## Bureaucracy

Closely allied to degree of organization, is the degree to which the agency is bureaucratized. Highly bureaucratic agencies, we hypothesized, would not be conducive to high level of Volunteer performance, but a complete absence of bureaucracy could lead to confusion and frustration for an inexperienced VISTA Volunteer. A moderate degree of bureaucracy would, we felt, give needed structure to the agency and help a Volunteer perform better.

In Table 33 below, we compare Volunteers' perceptions of agency bureaucracy with level of performance and discover an inverse trend.[1] As the amount of bureaucracy increases, the proportion of Volunteers considered high performers decreased. In agencies "highly" or "somewhat" bureaucratic, less than half of the Volunteers are at the lower end of the performance continuum. When there is a relative absence of bureaucracy, high performers increase to 58%.

Table 33. Volunteer's Perception of Agency Bureaucracy and Performance

| | Perception of Agency (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Highly Bureaucratic | Moderately Bureaucratic | Minimally Bureaucratic |
| High | 32 | 45 | 58 |
| Low | 68 | 55 | 42 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (19) | (58) | (33) |

$X^2 = 3.39$ df = 2 $P. \leq 18$

---

[1] Although the Chi Square for the table as a whole is not significant at the $P \leq .10$ level, the trend is definite and the findings worth considering. With a larger sample, the Chi Square might have been significant.

We cannot be certain about what aspects of performance are most adversely affected by excessive bureaucracy but interview material suggests willingness to put forth effort and commitment to agency. Whatever the specific interaction that occurs, it appears likely that a highly bureaucratic atmosphere is less conducive to high VISTA performance.

Excessive bureaucracy has a negative influence in all types of VISTA jobs and with Volunteers of all ages. But older Volunteers (22+) seem to be even more influenced by excessive bureaucracy and their effectiveness is sharply curtailed in highly bureaucratic agencies. Much to our surprise, younger Volunteers (under 22) seem scarcely affected by the amount of bureaucracy they perceive in their agencies.

Table 34. Relationship Between Level of Bureaucracy, Age of Volunteer and Performance

| | Age of Volunteer (Percent of Total) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Under 22 | | | Over 22 | | |
| | Bureaucracy in Agency | | | Bureaucracy in Agency | | |
| Performance Level | High | Medium | Minimum | High | Medium | Minimum |
| High | 50 | 40 | 44 | 25 | 49 | 73 |
| Low | 50 | 60 | 56 | 75 | 51 | 27 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (7) | (25) | (18) | (12) | (33) | (15) |

## Degree of Professionalism

Urban VISTA Sponsors exhibit varying degrees of professionalism. They range from organizations where professional status is at a premium,[1] and professional training a requirement for responsible positions and advancement, to those who purposely adopt an anti-professional stance.[1] Most VISTA sponsors, of course, fall between these two extremes. We hypothesized that VISTA Volunteers would perform better in moderately professionalized organizations.

---

[1] Hospitals, casework agencies, school systems.

Utilizing the Degree of Professionalism Scale[2] agencies were classified according to Volunteer perceptions as excessively professional, moderately professional and minimally professional. As measured on the Professionalism Scale, 24 agencies were perceived as excessively professional; 42 rated as moderately professional and 45 believed to be minimally professional.

Contrary to our hypothesis, the degree of professionalization was far less significantly related to performance than anticipated. Chi Square applied to the following table indicates only a trend towards a significant relationship. ($P \leq .30$).

Table 35. Excessive Professionalism and Performance

| | Agency Perceived by Volunteers As (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Excessively Professional | Moderately Professional | Minimally Professional |
| High | 33 | 45 | 56 |
| Low | 67 | 55 | 44 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases) | (24) | (42) | (45) |

$X^2 - 3.16$ df = 2 $P \leq .30$

---

[1] Neighborhood and block associations, some community action programs.

[2] Agencies rated as excessively professionalized were those where sharp demarcations exist between professional and non-professional staff re duties and status, where it takes a long time for new ideas, procedures to filter down, where there is too much emphasis on professionalism and where the staff is not close-knit, warm to each other.

In the above table, we find that as professionalism decreases, performance rises somewhat, but minimum professionalism in an agency by no means guarantees high performance. Excessive professionalism, however, appears quite strongly related to lower performance. Where the lines are sharply drawn between professional and non-professionals and there is a high premium on professional know-how, 67% of the Volunteers are rated as low performers.

Professionalism is another example of an agency factor capable of interfering with high performance, but not necessarily able to insure Volunteer success. If it is present to a moderate degree, VISTA Volunteers can live with it and even thrive under it in some situations. However, when perceived in excess, professionalism acts to interfere with and undermine effective performance. It is interesting to note that there are several agency factors which operate in this manner.[1] Their presence in a moderate or minimum state does not appear to significantly control performance. But once an excessive amount of the variable is perceived by the Volunteer, negative reactions occur and poor performance is likely to follow.

In order to look at the effect of age and type of job on the "professionalism - performance" relationship, we have dichotomized agencies having moderate or high degree of professionalism versus those with an absence of professionalism.

---

[1] Other factors operating in the same way are: openness to new ideas; bureaucracy, and degree of structure.

In the following tables we see that Volunteers on catalyst jobs perform at the highest level when their agencies are non-bureaucratic. With respect to service jobs, amount of bureaucracy does not play as significant a role. Perhaps Volunteers on service jobs in more highly structured agencies are able to take the fact of "professionalism" more in their stride. In hospitals and schools it is easier to accept the premium on professional standards. But in fluid community organization efforts where jobs are not clearly defined, demarcations between professional and non-professional are less meaningful. Where they do exist, they apparently act to restrict high performance.

Table 36. Degree of Professionalism in Agency And Job By Performance

| | Type of Job (Percent of Total) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Service-Bridge | | Catalyst | |
| Performance Level | High-Moderate Professionalism | Low Professionalism | High-Moderate Professionalism | Low Professionalism |
| High | 41 | 49 | 40 | 75 |
| Low | 59 | 58 | 60 | 25 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (51) | (33) | (15) | (12) |

Age is also a factor which further specifies the relationship between excessive professionalism and performance. The degree of professionalism in the agency had a much greater negative effect on older Volunteers than younger Volunteers. With older Volunteers, as the extent of professionalism increased, performance decreased. No association between excessive professionalism and job performance is found for younger Volunteers.

Table 37. Degree of Professionalism in Agency, Age Of Volunteer and Performance

| | Professionalism of Agency (Percent of Total) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Younger Volunteers | | Older Volunteers | |
| Performance Level | High-Moderate Professionalism | Low Professionalism | High-Moderate Professionalism | Low Professionalism |
| High | 43 | 41 | 40 | 70 |
| Low | 57 | 59 | 60 | 30 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (28) | (13) | (38) | (23) |

We have noted that in general the older Volunteers in our sample are better educated and more highly trained. Repeatedly, we find them more sensitive and more critical of agency environment (such factors as openness to new ideas, excessive bureaucracy, professionalism etc.) Perhaps older Volunteers give up more in joining VISTA than do younger college-drop outs, or they may have higher more inflexible standards.

Whatever the exact cause the performance of older Volunteers (22+) is consistently more likely to be negatively affected by adverse agency conditions, than is the case with younger Volunteers.

## The VISTA Agency and Volunteer Satisfaction

### Attitude Toward Clients

We hypothesized that an agency's attitudes towards its clients as perceived by the Volunteers would significantly influence a Volunteer's performance and his level of satisfaction in VISTA. Two aspects of this attitude interest us -- agency's involvement with and direct concern for the poor and their problems, and the extent of staff commitment to agency goals, programs and clients.

In the section on performance a highly significant relationship was discovered between agency concern for the poor[1] and Volunteer performance. A similarly strong association is found between the commitment of the agency to clients and Volunteer satisfaction ($P \leq .001$). We see in the following table that the greater the concern with the poor on the part of the agency, the stronger the Volunteer satisfaction. (And conversely, the less the concern the greater the dissatisfaction).

Table 38. Agency Concern With The Poor and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Agency Concern With Poor (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 39 | 20 | 15 |
| Medium | 52 | 40 | 21 |
| Low | 9 | 40 | 64 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (33) | (45) | (33) |

$X^2 = 21.73 \quad df = 4 \quad P \leq .001$

---

[1] As measured on the Agency Concern With Poor Scale.

Neither age nor type of job makes any difference with respect to the strong association between concern with the poor and Volunteer satisfaction. Young and old alike, catalyst and service job, the satisfaction of all Volunteers declines the less concerned with the poor they perceive their agency to be.

In addition to concern with the poor we expected VISTA Volunteers to react to the behavior and attitudes of the agency staff towards clients and program. If staff was committed and dedicated, Volunteer satisfaction, we believed, would be higher. Without question this is so. As can be seen in the table below, low staff commitment (as measured on the Staff Commitment Scale) results in low satisfaction. High staff commitment, on the other hand, increases the potential for high Volunteer satisfaction ($P \leq .02$).

Table 39. Degree of Staff Commitment and Volunteer Satisfaction
(Percent of Total)

| | Agency Commitment Index | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 23 | 24 | 20 |
| Medium | 48 | 44 | 22 |
| Low | 24 | 32 | 58 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (46) | (25) | (40) |

$X^2 = 11.22$ df = 4 $P \leq .02$

The positive relationship between degree of staff commitment and Volunteer satisfaction is true on all types of VISTA jobs and for Volunteers of all ages.

Thus, we find that Volunteer satisfaction with VISTA is deeply influenced by the devotion of the agency to the poor and the level of commitment of the agency staff. As noted previously, a Volunteer may continue to perform effectively in spite of lack of strong staff commitment but his satisfaction will be considerably diminished. However, if an agency is perceived as only minimally interested in the cause of the poor, most VISTA Volunteers will neither perform effectively nor achieve any real satisfaction in their VISTA experience.

It would appear that a Sponsoring Agency's attitude toward the poor, as reflected in goals, program and staff commitment is one of the factors that discriminates most highly between a successful and unsuccessful VISTA experience.

### Utilization of VISTA Volunteers

Of considerable importance to performance was the way Sponsors utilized VISTA Volunteers. If VISTAs were given jobs appropriate to their skills and the unique VISTA role, they performed better than if they were merely used as additional manpower on relatively routine assignments. An even stronger relationship occurs with respect to appropriate utilization of Volunteers and Volunteer satisfaction.[1] If a Volunteer feels he is not being used fully by his agency, he more than likely will be dissatisfied, while satisfaction rises considerably when Volunteers perceive they are being used to their fullest. ($P \leq .001$). See Table 40 below.

---

[1] The Chi Square was $P \leq .04$ when performance was compared with use of Volunteers. With respect to Volunteer satisfaction it is $P < .001$.

## Table 40. Utilization of Volunteer And Volunteer Satisfaction (Percent of Total)

| Level of Satisfaction | Use as Routine Manpower | Used to Fullest Advantage |
|---|---|---|
| High | 9 | 31 |
| Medium | 29 | 42 |
| Low | 62 | 27 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (34) | (77) |

$X^2 = 13.17$ df = 2 $P \leq .001$

Effective utilization is as important for Volunteers on service-bridge jobs as those on community organization assignments, and the utilization-satisfaction relationship held for Volunteers of all ages. The importance of proper use of VISTA Volunteer for both performance and satisfaction suggest that this factor needs serious consideration in any evaluation of an agency as a placement for a VISTA volunteer.

Whether or not an agency prepared ahead for VISTA Volunteers or gave training when they arrived, did not materially affect the level of Volunteer satisfaction. As in the case of these variables and performance, any deficiencies occurring in the beginning can apparently be compensated for during the year of VISTA service. Factors such as advance preparation or on-the-job training do not appear to materially affect either Volunteer performance or VISTA satisfaction.

## Agency Structure and Organization

### Degree of Professionalism

The only factor pertaining to agency structure which relates significantly to Volunteer satisfaction is the degree of professionalism perceived in the Sponsoring Agency. Excessive professionalism is clearly associated with lower Volunteer Satisfaction, while satisfaction rises consistently as the degree of professionalism declines. (Differences are statistically significant of the $P \leq .04$ level).

Table 41. Degree of Professionalism and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Extent of Professionalism (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 12 | 26 | 29 |
| Medium | 15 | 36 | 47 |
| Low | 63 | 38 | 24 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (24) | (42) | (45) |

$X^2 = 9.84$ df = 4 $P \leq .04$

Vista Volunteers, according to our study, are highly sensitive to sharp demarcations between professional and non-professional staff. Both satisfaction and performance are adversely affected in agencies they perceive as excessively professionalized.

Volunteers on catalyst jobs are as unhappy with too much stress on professionalism as are "service-bridge Volunteers."

## Bureaucracy and Openness to New Ideas

In general, the remaining factors of agency structure (bureaucracy, openness to new ideas, amount of structure) are only weakly related to satisfaction.[1] When bureaucracy and openness to new ideas are related to Volunteer satisfaction, the presence of an excessive amount of the factor (i. e., high bureaucracy and lack of openness to new ideas) results in low satisfaction. But absence of bureaucracy and complete openness to new ideas does not, in and of itself, insure high satisfaction. (See Appendix A, Tables A-12 and A-13).

A similar phenomenon occurred when these factors were related to performance. This suggests that most factors pertaining to how an agency is organized or structured are detrimental only if present in a restrictive form. Thus it would seem important to insure that a VISTA agency is not overly professionalized, closed to new ideas or excessively bureaucratic. In the absence of such extremes, these factors are weak discriminators of either Volunteer performance or satisfaction.

## Degree of Organization

With respect to degree of organization and satisfaction, a reverse relationship occurs. In agencies perceived as "highly structured" we find Volunteers tend to be moderately or highly satisfied. On the one hand, there is a tendency in "loosely structured" agencies for Volunteers to be more dissatisfied.[1] See Table 42 below.

---

[1] An inspection of the tables show a trend relationship but Chi Square probabilities exceed the . 10 level, considered minimally significant in our report.

Table 42. Degree of Structure and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Agencies Perceived As: (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | Highly Structured | Moderately Structured | Loosely Structured |
| High | 33 | 20 | 23 |
| Medium | 45 | 42 | 28 |
| Low | 22 | 38 | 49 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (27) | (45) | (39) |

$X^2=5.728$ df = 4 $P. \leq 22$

When type of job is taken into account, we find that Volunteers in loosely structured service agencies are less satisfied (58% dissatisfied) than are Volunteers on catalyst jobs in similarly loosely organized agencies (31% dissatisfied).

In general, community action agencies are never more fluid and less highly professionalized than the more traditional service organizations. Assignments are carried out in the neighborhood and Volunteers report greater freedom with respect to hours, days of work and duties of the job. A minimum of structure is more easily accepted and, in fact, may be welcomed by many catalyst Volunteers.

---

[1] Though not statistically significant, a definite trend appears in the table ($P \leq .22$)

## Summary and Contrast

Upon completion of VISTA training, all Volunteers are sent to a Sponsoring Agency under whose auspices they work during their year of VISTA service. The attitude of the agency, its structure and readiness to accept Volunteers, and the provisions it makes for on-going supervision can immeasurably alter the well being of the Volunteers and his chances of performing a useful and satisfying service for the poor. Three areas of agency were studied in relation to Volunteer performance and satisfaction -- agency concern with poor, utilization of VISTA Volunteers and agency structure and organization.

Of all the aspects of agency, VISTA Volunteers react most strongly to the amount of dedication and devotion to the poor they observe around them. Agencies which are perceived by Volunteers as highly involved with and committed to poverty clients contain the highest proportion of highly successful and highly satisfied Volunteers.

The type of job held by the Volunteer in no way minimizes the importance of agency commitment to the poor. Volunteers on service and bridge jobs evidence as much difficulty in performance and a similar decline in satisfaction as do community organizers, if their agency is not seen as deeply involved with the poor.

Another aspect of agency interaction with clients is the enthusiasm and dedication of staff. Contrary to our expectations, Volunteers perform no better in agencies with highly enthusiastic and dedicated staffs than in agencies where they rate the staff as moderately or even minimally involved and committed. Apparently given a meaningful job assignment, allowing them to utilize their skills for the benefit of poor clients, Volunteers can overlook limitations they perceive with respect to staff dedication and continue to perform to the best of their abilities. However there is a highly significant relationship between the level of Volunteer satisfaction and perceptions of staff involvement and enthusiasm. The positive relationship between degree of staff commitment and Volunteer satisfaction remains constant on all types of VISTA jobs and for Volunteers of all ages.

Of considerable importance to effective performance was the way Sponsors utilized VISTA Volunteers. If Volunteers were given jobs appropriate to their skills and the uniqueness of the VISTA role, they performed significantly better than if they were merely used as additional manpower on relatively routine assignments. The relationship between appropriate utilization and Volunteer satisfaction is even stronger.[1] If a Volunteer feels he is not being used fully by his agency he will most likely be dissatisfied, while satisfaction rises considerably when Volunteers perceive they are being used by their Sponsors to their fullest capacity.

Concern with the poor and full utilization of Volunteers have been found to be strongly associated with effective performance and high satisfaction. We expected, similarly, that factors of agency structure and organization would be discriminators between low and high success and satisfaction. Only a few operate as hypothesized and most of these relate only in a negative manner.

---

[1] $P \leq .04$ in case of performance and $P \leq .001$ in case of satisfaction.

Thus we found that if agencies were perceived by Volunteers to be "highly bureaucratic," "not at all open to new ideas," or "excessively professional" (sharply discriminating between professional and non-professional staff), both Volunteer performance and satisfaction was considerably lowered. But the reverse did not necessarily hold true. A moderate degree of bureaucracy, professionalism, or openness to new ideas did not, in and of itself, insure either high performance or satisfaction. Apparently Volunteers are not affected by moderate degree of agency control, but when they perceive such factors in the excess, performance and satisfaction will be negatively affected.

The optimum degree of structure is an interesting case in itself. The level of Volunteer performance is not affected by whether an agency is "highly organized" or "loosely organized" -- highly effective Volunteers can be found to the same extent under both conditions of organization. But the need for structure is evident in the relationship between amount of agency structure and level of Volunteer satisfaction. There is a tendency for Volunteers in agencies described as "not at all organized" to be dissatisfied, while Volunteers in agencies perceived as "highly organized" tend more often to be moderately or highly satisfied.

# LIVING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Introduction

VISTA Volunteers are expected, whenever possible, to live in the immediate neighborhood in which they work.

Thus while not indigenous, the VISTA Volunteer soon becomes part of the neighborhood. He shops in the same stores as his clients, uses the same laundromat, stands around and chats with neighbors and welcomes the teenagers into his apartment to listen to records or "shoot the bull." Theoretically, living in the neighborhood allows the Volunteer to show his willingness to give any kind of help and his genuine concern for his neighbors on the block.

It should be noted, however, that living on the block affects social distance in two ways. It not only brings clients and VISTAs closer together, but at the same time acts to close the gap between the middle class background of the Volunteer and the culture of poverty. The vast majority of Volunteers in this study endorsed the concept of living with the poor and indicated that the experience was crucial to their understanding of poverty, and to their ability to successfully identify with and relate to their clients. In general the Supervisor of the Volunteers also endorsed the idea, but with greater reservations. Some Supervisors specifically challenged the claim that living among clients was a prerequisite for effective relationships with the poor. Most, however, agreed that the benefit was considerable in terms of increased Volunteer knowledge about poverty, and the needs of the poor.

## Hypotheses

As has been noted, living and working among the poor is conceptualized by VISTA in two ways. On the one hand, it is felt that living and working in the same neighborhood enables the Volunteer to be on call for clients and neighbors 24 hours per day. This availability will immeasurably increase what the Volunteers can accomplish for the poor. On the other hand, living among the poor is seen as deepening the Volunteers' understanding of the nature of poverty and the needs of the poor. We, therefore, hypothesized that Volunteers who live in the same neighborhood in which they work will:

perform better
be more satisfied
feel that they make a greater difference
    in the lives of those with whom they work
be more active in the community with neighbors and clients

## Indicators

In the four-month interviews held with Volunteers, a series of questions were posed regarding place of residence, activities engaged in during free time and impact on clients. These responses, together with the performance and satisfaction indices, comprise the basic data used here to measure the impact of living in the neighborhood with the poor.

The measure of involvement in the community deserves special attention. Volunteers were given a check list of activities and asked to indicate those they engaged in during their free time. (Items included cultural and social activities as well as involvement in political and social action). Included in the list were four items pertaining specifically to involvement in the neighborhood -- standing around and talking to people in the neighborhood, visiting neighbors, attending meetings in the neighborhood and helping organize a group in the neighborhood. Responses to these four items were highly intercorrelated indicating that they measured the same dimension. They were, therefore, combined into a single activity scale. Volunteers were classified into four groups: high active, high-medium active, medium-low active, and low active.

## Place of Residence of Study Volunteers

It is impossible to ascertain the impact of "living in the neighborhood"[1] on performance, satisfaction, and the poor unless there is a sizeable group of Volunteers living where they work and sizeable group living elsewhere. Fortunately, in our sample of 111 Volunteers there are two such distinct groups whose performance and satisfaction levels can be compared.

Living among the people whom one serves is, of course, a reality only for VISTA Volunteers attached to agencies serving clearly defined neighborhood populations. Some urban VISTA sponsors, such as the Bail Bond Projects, draw clients from all parts of the city, so that the concept of neighborhood living is not germaine. Thirteen study Volunteers worked for such agencies and are excluded from the comparisons which follow.

---

[1] When we use the term "living in the neighborhood" or "living in" in this chapter, we mean living in the immediate vicinity of the agency amidst the clients with whom the Volunteer works.

Of the 98 Volunteers who worked in specific neighborhoods, 66 Volunteers, or 67%, lived directly in the neighborhood among the people they served. The reasons the remaining did not varied. In some cases agencies discouraged "living in" because of fears for Volunteer safety; often it was difficult to find an apartment in the immediate vicinity of the agency. Sometimes Volunteers chose to share an apartment with fellow VISTAS in adjacent poverty areas. However, a majority of the Volunteers who did not live in the immediate vicinity of their agencies lived in other poverty or borderline areas. As a result the number of Volunteers reporting contacts with the poor after agency hours considerably exceeds the number actually living in the immediate vicinity of their work.

Whether or not Volunteers lived where they worked was not related to the age of the Volunteer. Older Volunteers (22 and older) were as likely to be found living among their clients as were the 18-21 year old Volunteers. (See Appendix A, Table A-8).

However, the major goals of the Sponsoring agency apparently influenced where Volunteers lived. Volunteers working for agencies mainly concerned with social action and community organization were much more likely to live in the immediate vicinity of the agency than were those involved in service agencies or agencies with both service and community organization goals. Eighty-four percent of the Volunteers in "community organization" agencies lived with clients as opposed to 60% in the other two types of agencies. (See Appendix A, Table A-9).

## Findings

### Living in the Neighborhood and Performance

To what extent does the place of residence of a Volunteer affect his level of performance? The following table compares the performance level of Volunteers who live in the immediate neighborhood in which they work with the performance of those living elsewhere.[1] The findings indicate no significant relationship between place of residence and level of performance.

Table 43. Volunteers' Place of Residence and Performance

| | (Percent of Total) | |
|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Living in Work Neighborhood | Not Living in Work Neighborhood |
| High | 47 | 47 |
| Low | 53 | 53 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Number of cases[1] | (66) | (32) |

$X^2$ = not significant

[1] Thirteen Volunteers, who worked for agencies drawing clients from all over the city, are excluded from all comparisons in this section.

Living and working in the same immediate neighborhood does not apparently insure superior Volunteer performance as evaluated by Supervisors.

---

[1] But working for agencies serving specific areas and therefore eligible to live in the immediate neighborhood.

If being available 24 hours makes a difference in what a Volunteer can do for a client, the impact is not reflected in a higher level of performance.

Several factors explain the absence of relationship between performance level and where a Volunteer lives.

First, the nature of the performance rating used in this study must be understood. The measure of successful performance is the Direct Supervisor's evaluation of the Volunteer's work. This evaluation is related to specifically defined job tasks and is made within an agency context. (Unfortunately, it was impossible to ask clients for independent evaluations of Volunteer performance). As a result, it is quite possible that much informal assistance given to clients after agency hours (by virtue of residence in the neighborhood) passes unnoticed and is not reflected in higher performance rating by Supervisors.

The apparent discrepancy between the Supervisors' evaluation of performance and actual amount of Volunteer involvement with the poor after agency hours is vividly indicated by the following comparison. The level of performance of Volunteers, receiving requests for help from clients and neighbors after agency hours, is contrasted with the performance of Volunteers not involved with clients after hours. No difference in performance level occurs. Apparently, what Volunteers do after they leave the agency plays little part in the evaluation of their performance by their Direct Supervisors.

Table 44. Volunteers Receiving Requests for Help From Clients After Agency Hours by Performance

| Performance Level | (Percent of Total)<br>Received Requests | Did Not Receive Requests |
|---|---|---|
| High | 45 | 50 |
| Low | 55 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Number of cases | (75) | (34) |

$X^2$ = not significant

There is, however, a second and even more compelling reason why there is no direct relationship between where a Volunteer lived and his performance. Increased service to the poor is only part of the reason Volunteers live among clients. Volunteers who live in the neighborhood in which they work are constantly faced with poverty. Their understanding of and compassion for the needs of the poor are thereby enhanced. This was not only true for those in our sample who lived in the immediate vicinity of their agencies, but also true for the vast majority of other study Volunteers who also lived in adjacent poverty pockets or borderline areas.[1] Thus, any value derived from living among the poor was shared by all.

## Living in the Neighborhood and Activity After Agency Hours

Although living in the immediate vicinity of the agency did not significantly alter the level of Volunteer performance, it may be important with respect to Volunteer involvement with the poor after agency hours.

---

[1] Actually, the minimum living allowances of VISTA Volunteers requires living in such locations, unless a Volunteer receives extensive supplementary income from home.

According to the Activity Scale, about 55% of the Volunteers were highly involved in the neighborhood[1]; the remaining 45% were relatively inactive. Our interest lies in determining whether Volunteers living and working in the same neighborhood were more likely to be highly active than those living elsewhere. Such a comparison is shown in the following table.

Table 45. Level of Activity in Community and Place of Residence

| Degree of Activity in Community[2] | (Percent of Total)<br>Living in Work Neighborhood | Not Living in Work Neighborhood |
|---|---|---|
| High | 64 | 50 |
| Low | 36 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (66) | (32) |

$X^2 = 1.65$ df = 1 $P \leq .20$

It would appear that Volunteers living and working in the same area are slightly more involved with their neighbors in their free time than are those living elsewhere. However, the difference in the proportion of highly active Volunteers in the two groups is neither substantial nor statistically significant. ($P \leq .20$) More striking is the fact that half the Volunteers who do not live in the immediate area in which they work are highly involved in neighborhood activity.

---

[1] High involvement included most or all of the following: visiting neighbors, standing around and talking with neighbors, attending neighborhood meetings and helping to organize a meeting in the neighborhood (not agency-connected).

[2] As in similar tables, "high" and "high-medium" have been combined into a single "high" category; "low" and "low-medium" into a "low" category.

The help given by such Volunteers to their poor neighbors is, of course, unrelated and in addition to their regular agency tasks. Our findings suggest that the concept of living with the poor is enlarged in urban VISTA. Most urban Volunteers live in ghetto neighborhoods, although not always within a few blocks of their sponsoring agencies. As VISTAS dedicated to the needs of the poor, many apparently attempt to get to know their neighbors wherever they live. If they are active Volunteers they will visit with neighbors, give assistance, and act as bridges between the ghetto and the outside world. But this activity may be beyond the horizons of their agency and may involve a different group of poor people. Their activity will probably not be reflected in any performance evaluation made by their Supervisors but will nevertheless be an important part of their impact as VISTA Volunteers.

### Living in the Neighborhood and Volunteer Satisfaction

Whether or not Volunteers live in the immediate neighborhood where they work is unrelated to VISTA performance. To what extent does it influence Volunteer satisfaction? Little if at all. Volunteers living in the same area as their clients are no more likely to be highly satisfied than those who work in one neighborhood and live in another, as the following table shows:

Table 46. Volunteer Satisfaction and Place Of Residence[1]

| Level of Satisfaction | Living and Working In Same Area | Living and Working In Different Areas |
|---|---|---|
| | (Percent of Total) | |
| High | 26 | 22 |
| Medium | 42 | 31 |
| Low | 32 | 47 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (66) | (32) |

$X^2$ = not significant

An explanation of why Volunteers who live in the neighborhood with clients do not evidence greater satisfaction may be found in the nature of the two components of Volunteer satisfaction. On the one hand, there is the aspect of "personal" satisfaction which includes a sense of doing a meaningful job, and the opportunity to utilize to the fullest one's skills, abilities, and creativity. The other component of VISTA satisfaction stems from the raison d'etre of being a Volunteer -- to make a difference in the lives of clients (and, thereby, a dent in poverty.)[2]

---

[1] Thirteen of the 111 Volunteers under study worked for agencies which drew clients from all over the city. Inasmuch as living with clients is an impossibility for such Volunteers, they are excluded from all comparisons in this section.

[2] It is sometimes very hard for a Volunteer to sort out his feelings about satisfaction, On occasion the two sides of satisfaction may be in conflict. Thus, it is not unusual, in talking with Volunteers, to hear -- "Oh I love what I'm doing -- teaching is great, but I'm not sure this is what VISTA should be doing. Am I really making a VISTA contribution?"

The Satisfaction Index utilized in the above comparison (and throughout the study) is a measure of general satisfaction with VISTA and includes, to an unspecified extent, both aspects of satisfaction. It is not likely that where a Volunteer resides will affect his feelings about how his skills are used on the job and how meaningful he/she finds work. Where he lives, however, could have an impact on what he can do for clients.

In the interview there was a specific item designed to measure the Volunteer's perception of his impact on clients.

A contrast of Volunteer evaluations of the difference made in the lives of clients with whether or not the Volunteer lived in the neighborhood of work gives another indication of why satisfaction and place of residence are unrelated.

Table 47. Place of Residence and the Difference Made by Volunteers in Lives of Clients

| | Place of Residence (Percent of Total) | |
|---|---|---|
| Difference in Lives of Clients | Lived in Immediate Neighborhood | Lived in Other Poverty Areas |
| A great deal | 42 | 44 |
| Some | 38 | 34 |
| Not too much | 20 | 22 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases[1] | (64) | (32) |

$X^2$ = not significant

[1] Complete data on two Volunteers is missing.

---

As can be seen in the above table, where the Volunteer lived was unrelated to the amount of difference the Volunteer felt he made in the lives of those with whom he worked. Volunteers who lived in the same neighborhood in which they worked were no more likely to feel they had made a great deal of difference in the lives of their clients than were Volunteers who lived and worked in separate areas. Apparently, impact on clients comes mainly from job performance and not whether one is available in the neighborhood 24 hours per day. This finding further underscores our previous contention that much of the activity with neighbors after agency hours (visiting, giving assistance, etc.) though extremely valuable, was not primarily agency or job connected.

Table 48. Activity in Community and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Degree of Activity in Community (Percent of Total) | |
|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | High Activity | Low Activity |
| High | 21 | 28 |
| Medium | 39 | 36 |
| Low | 39 | 36 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (61) | (50) |

$X^2$ = not significant

As can be seen in the above table, how active a Volunteer is in the neighborhood after agency hours is not related to overall satisfaction with VISTA. As noted previously, the amount of such activity does not make the important dent in poverty, according to the Volunteer, who sees his day-to-day work on the job as the more crucial aspect of VISTA. Perhaps this attitude reflects the difficulty in a big city of establishing meaningful relationships with neighbors, rich or poor, in one year's time. It is not surprising, therefore, that most urban Volunteers interviewed saw their agency work as their main point of concentration and expressed their happiness or frustration with VISTA most often in terms of job, agency or supervisor.

## Summary: Value of Living with the Poor

Living in the immediate neighborhood in which you work is not perceived by the Study Volunteers as making a critical difference in personal satisfaction with VISTA nor in the amount of assistance given to clients. In rural or migrant VISTA where the poor live in self-contained communities, living among them may offer more direct carryover value from job to free time. But in large urban cities where life is more fragmented and people dispersed, the direct impact on clients of living and working in the same neighborhood is not so easily seen.

However, the principle of living with the poor is considered by both Volunteers and Supervisors to be crucial to adequate understanding of poverty and the needs of the poor. It appears to be one of the intangible reasons why minimally trained VISTA Volunteers can quickly establish relationships with the poor and perform important tasks often carried by professionally trained workers. Our data suggests that it is incorrect to expect in urban VISTA a direct one-to-one carryover from work to free time by virtue of where a Volunteer lives. What can be expected, however, is that living among the poor enables middle-class white young people to narrow the gap between previous background and the culture of poverty. However, this experience may come to the urban Volunteer who lives in another poverty pocket one mile from his Agency as well as the Volunteer living on the block. The important criteria are that the Volunteer lives in the heart of the ghetto and in conditions similar to his clients.

The foregoing findings do not in any way vitiate the VISTA precept of living among the poor. Rather, they sharpen the conceptualization of the principle by indicating what can reasonably be expected from "living in" in the case of urban Volunteers. The biggest gain appears to be an increased understanding of poverty and an ability to close the social distance between the middle-class Volunteers and the poor. This increased understanding will not necessarily be mirrored in an increased ability to perform a specific job assignment, as evaluated by a Supervisor. Nor will "living in" mean an increased amount of assistance for a narrowly defined group of clients. However, the very fact of living in the urban ghetto among the poor has a tremendous impact on the Volunteer and both Volunteers and Supervisors see "living in" as essential in making the ideals of VISTA a reality.

3

## AN OVERVIEW

In the preceding chapter we have looked separately at the various aspects of VISTA and isolated a series of individual factors significantly related to how well a Volunteer will perform and his chances of satisfaction in VISTA. But any system operates as a totality, and VISTA is no exception. Not only do the individual variables interact but it is likely that some will be more relevant than others to effective performance and high satisfaction. In evaluating a particular agency as a potential placement for VISTA Volunteers, it is important to know both the relevant criteria and their relative importance.

In this final chapter, therefore, we will attempt to put the pieces together and determine the rank order of importance of the factors previously found related to Volunteer performance and satisfaction. We have employed the Cramér's V Coefficient to measure the strength of association. This coefficient varies between 0 and 1 for all contingency tables regardless of size;[1] the higher the coefficient the greater the degree of association between the factor and either successful performance or high level of satisfaction.

In Table 49 which follows the sixteen variables relevant to Volunteer

---

[1] The formula for the Cramér's V Coefficient is as follows:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{X2}{N \text{ Min } (r-1)(c-1)}}$$

where min (r-1)(c-1) refers to the minimum of the two variables (r-1) or (c-1) performance are rank ordered according to their Cramér's coefficient. It seems likely that the higher the degree of association shown, the more important the factor in positively influencing the performance of a VISTA Volunteer.

The same table also shows the relative strength of association of these same factors to Volunteer satisfaction. By juxtaposing the relationships, we can more readily observe which factors are mutually important to both performance and satisfaction and which are applicable to only one.

Table 49. Overview of Factors Associated with Successful Performance and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Strength of Association with High Level of Performance | | Strength of Association with High Level of Satisfaction | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Rank Order | Cramér's V coefficient | Rank Order | Cramér's V coefficient |
| Statistically Significant[1] Relationships | | | | |
| Close relationship with Supervisor | 1 | .292 | 4 | .246 |
| Volunteer's feel have competency for job | 2 | .287 | 3 | .278 |
| Agency is concerned with poor | 3 | .284 | 2 | .313 |
| VISTA job offers chance to utilize skills, abilities | 4 | .275 | Not tested - included in Satisfaction Index | |

---

[1] Chi Squares at the $P \leq .01$ level to $P \leq .10$ level

continued

| Variable | Strength of Association with High Level of Performance |  | Strength of Association with High Level of Satisfaction |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Rank Order | Cramer's V coefficient | Rank Order | Cramer's V coefficient |
| Type of VISTA job (community organization | 5 | .222 | not related |  |
| Agency using Volunteers to fullest advantage | 6 | .193 | 1 | .345 |
| A heavy workload | 7 | .182 | 9 | .200 |
| Success in training | 8 | .179 |  |  |
| Volunteers from lower socio-economic status | not related |  |  |  |
| Agencies that are close knit - not excessively professionalized | 10 | .166 | 7 | .211 |
| Agencies with dedicated staff | not related |  | 6 | .225 |
| Volunteer satisfaction with competency of supervisor | 9 | .176 | 8 | .205 |
| Trend Relationships[1] |  |  |  |  |
| Jobs with clients that are poor | not related |  | 10 | .165 |
| Volunteers completing only some college[2] | not related |  | 10 | .165 |
| Agencies not excessively bureaucratic | 9 | .176 | 11 | .163 |
| Agencies evidencing some degree of structure | not related |  | 12 | .161 |

---

[1] X2's ranged from P ≤ .10 to P ≤ .30 level but inspection of tables indicates some relationship between valuable and either performance or satisfaction.

[2] As opposed to college graduates or students having graduate training.

From the above table several conclusions can be drawn:

... there is no one aspect of the VISTA experience which alone controls the success of a Volunteer or his satisfaction in VISTA. Among the factors highly associated with effective performance and high satisfaction, we find variables pertaining to the nature of the job, the kind of supervision, the Sponsoring Agency, and the Volunteer's feelings about himself. In attempting to evaluate a given placement for VISTA, it is important to look at several factors of the situation and to consider the interaction of the significant variables.

... However, there is considerable agreement among the variables most highly related to successful performance and those affecting Volunteer success. Among the six factors most highly associated with performance we find the first four satisfaction factors. This is not altogether surprising in view of the high correlation between the performance ratings of the Supervisors and the satisfaction ratings of the Volunteers. VISTA Volunteers are highly motivated in their efforts to assist the poor and tend to be very objective about their performance. If an agency is dissatisfied with the work of a Volunteer, it is likely that the VISTA will be equally unhappy in the given situation. When the Sponsor's goals are compatible with the Volunteers (both highly oriented towards serving the poor), most of the same factors can be expected to influence both performance and satisfaction.

. . . Approximately 11 variables are highly associated with performance and 13 factors strongly influential with respect to satisfaction. The variables most associated with effective performance are having a close supportive relationship with a supervisor, feeling competent with respect to the skills and knowledge required for the VISTA job, and working for a Sponsoring Agency which is highly committed to the poor and their needs.

With respect to a high satisfaction level, most important is a Sponsoring Agency that utilizes VISTA Volunteers to their fullest capacity[1], followed by a close supportive Supervisor, a sense of competency to carry out the job requirements, and a Sponsoring Agency dedicated to serving the poor. ... Interestingly enough, the type of VISTA job is highly associated with performance but unrelated to the potential for Volunteer satisfaction. Volunteers on catalyst jobs appear to perform better than those on service or bridge jobs, but service-bridge VISTAs are as satisfied with their VISTA experience as are their colleagues involved in community organization. It may well be that standards and skill requirements are higher on service jobs. But there is evidence that community organization assignments are more compatible with the full flowering of the VISTA role. If VISTA Volunteers bring anything special to their work with the poor, it is the manner and quality of their relationships with clients. Because most Volunteers are young, dedicated and non-professional, social distance is minimized. The better Volunteers rapidly establish close peer relationships with clients and neighbors in the ghetto. They often become deeply involved in the total "gestalt" of their clients' lives and are able to intervene and offer help not normally encompassed in the professional role. It is likely that community organization assignments are more conducive to this total VISTA role and that Volunteers are more fully utilized on such jobs.

---

[1] As opposed to utilization of VISTA as merely more manpower for routine jobs.

But satisfaction is something else again. When Volunteers on service jobs are given a chance to utilize their capacities on behalf of clients in need, they can feel as self-fulfilled and satisfied with VISTA as do Volunteers involved in community organization. In addition, it is likely that service jobs provide Volunteers with more concrete evidence of the value of their VISTA work.

. . . Demographic characteristics are noticeably absent from the list of highly associated variables. By and large the background of a Volunteer appears to have little influence on his/her chances for success or satisfaction in VISTA. Volunteers from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to be somewhat more satisfied with VISTA, probably because the VISTA experience opens up new opportunities for upward mobility. Similarly college dropouts express slightly more satisfaction than college graduates. VISTA probably meets the special needs of this group for a socially acceptable outlet for self-exploitation. But in general the background of a Volunteer will be of little help in prognosticating success or satisfaction.

. . . Also of relatively minor importance are questions of agency structure and organization. (i. e., amount of bureaucracy, receptivity to new ideas, fluidity, amount of professionalism, etc. ). Such factors in their extreme or restrictive form tend to operate against effective performance or

Volunteer satisfaction. But in the absence of extremes, successful and happy Volunteers can be found in loosely organized agencies or in moderately organized agencies; in bureaucratic school systems as well as in "swinging" block associations. The real question appears to be the proper match between the individual Volunteer and agency. It is unlikely that there is any "right" amount of structure for all VISTA agencies. . . . If a Sponsoring Agency is committed to the poor, uses Volunteers to their fullest capacity, provides sufficient work and a strong supportive Supervisor, and has a dedicated staff accepting of VISTAS, it is likely that Volunteers will perform more effectively and be more satisfied with their VISTA experience.

## Some Relevant Questions

A VISTA representative concerned with the success and satisfaction of Volunteers might well ask himself the following questions in evaluating an agency as a VISTA placement.

1. Is this agency strongly committed to serving the poor and to the fight against poverty?

2. Will it offer VISTA Volunteers the opportunity to utilize the full range of their skills and abilities? Or are the contemplated assignments fairly routine and already handled by other staff?

3. To what extent can the agency provide community organization opportunities where Volunteers can live and work directly in the neighborhood with the poor? If service jobs are planned, to what extent will Volunteers be allowed to reach out beyond the confines of the agency and the particular

service function in order to build "total" relationships with clients?

4. Can the agency provide skilled supervisors who have the time, interest and willingness to become deeply involved with VISTA Volunteers? (In some cases this may mean assuming a surrogate parent role; in all cases it entails support, sustenance and training in skills.)

5. Does the agency have sufficient work to keep the Volunteers very busy (certainly more than 40 hours per week)?

6. What kind of an atmosphere is prevalent in the agency? Is there a warm, close knit feeling without sharp cleavages between professional and non-professional staff? To what extent does the agency place a premium on professional training? Will lack of such training severely restrict that a Volunteer can do in the agency?

7. How structured is the agency? Is there sufficient organization to provide Volunteers with a sense of stability and security? Will excessive red tape and a multiplicity of rules and regulations hamper the enthusiasm of young Volunteers and their commitment to agency and job?

8. How receptive is the agency to new ideas and suggestions from Volunteers for new ways of work?

9. Is the agency willing to let VISTA Volunteer live in the ghetto neighborhoods with the poor?

# APPENDIX A

# APPENDIX A

## Table A-1. Volunteer Job Performance By Sex

| | Sex (Percent of Total) | |
|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Male | Female |
| High | 24 | 25 |
| High-Medium | 20 | 25 |
| Medium-Low | 30 | 27 |
| Low | 26 | 23 |
| number of cases | (54) | (57) |

$X^2$ = not significant

# APPENDIX A

## Table A-2. Size of Place of Residence During Youth and Performance

| | Size of Residence (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Up to 50,000 | 50,000-250,000 | 250,000 and Over |
| High | 28 | 23 | 21 |
| High-Medium | 18 | 23 | 31 |
| Medium-Low | 32 | 16 | 34 |
| Low | 22 | 38 | 14 |
| number of cases | (50) | (31) | (29) |

$X^2$ = not significant

## APPENDIX A

Table A-3. Comparison of Attitude Scores of Highest and Lowest Performing Volunteers After Four Months in the Field.[1]

| Scale | High Performers Mean | High Performers S. D. | Low Performers Mean | Low Performers S. D. | T-Test Value | Interpretation[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Authoritarianism | 27.6 | 4.58 | 29.6 | 5.01 | 1.40 | N. S. |
| Democracy | 22.1 | 3.98 | 23.5 | 4.27 | 1.16 | N. S. |
| Political-Economic Conservatism | 22.6 | 5.01 | 23.8 | 5.51 | 0.80 | N. S. |
| Action-Apathy | 8.9 | 3.27 | 9.4 | 2.52 | 0.63 | N. S. |
| Individual Potency | 4.9 | 2.79 | 5.6 | 2.79 | 0.79 | N. S. |
| Group Potency | 6.9 | 2.63 | 7.7 | 1.85 | 1.15 | N. S. |
| Anomie | 23.4 | 3.25 | 21.9 | 5.33 | 1.10 | N. S. |
| Economic Normlessness | 25.4 | 5.21 | 25.0 | 4.70 | 0.26 | N. S. |
| Political Normlessness | 17.3 | 3.64 | 16.5 | 4.63 | 0.57 | N. S. |

---

[1] In this comparison the test scores of the four month field testing were utilized in as much as these scores represent Volunteer attitudes at the time performance was evaluated by Supervisors.

[2] T-tests were used to determine the significance of differences between means of the two groups.

# APPENDIX A

## Table A-4. Relationship Between Education and Job According to Performance

(Percent of Total)

| | Service-Bridge | | Community Organization | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Some College Or Less | College Graduate Or More | Some College Or Less | College Graduate Or More |
| High | 15 | 23 | 50 | 36 |
| High-Medium | 18 | 32 | 20 | 12 |
| Medium-Low | 28 | 36 | 20 | 19 |
| Low | 39 | 9 | 10 | 42 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (39) | (44) | (10) | (17) |

## APPENDIX A

### Table A-5. Amount of Work and Performance

| Performance Level | Amount of Work (Percent of Total)<br>Too Much | Enough | Too Little |
|---|---|---|---|
| High | 46 | 23 | 19 |
| High-Medium | 27 | 24 | 12 |
| Medium-Low | 18 | 31 | 25 |
| Low | 9 | 23 | 44 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (11) | (84) | (16) |

$X^2 = 7.48$ df = 6 $P \leq .279$

# APPENDIX A

## Table A-6. Supportiveness of Supervisor and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Amount of Support From Supervisor (Percent of Total) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | High | High Medium | Medium Low | Low |
| High | 36 | 27 | 12 | 17 |
| Medium | 36 | 38 | 56 | 21 |
| Low | 28 | 35 | 32 | 62 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (36) | (36) | (25) | (24) |

$X^2 = 13.43$ df = 6 $P \leq .04$

## APPENDIX A

### Table A-7. Satisfaction With Supervisor and Volunteer Satisfaction

|  | Degree of Satisfaction with Supervisor (Percent of Total) |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Satisfaction | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 36 | 17 | 16 |
| Medium | 41 | 39 | 32 |
| Low | 23 | 44 | 52 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (44) | (36) | (31) |

$X^2 = .935$ df = 4 $P \leq .05$

# APPENDIX A

## Table A-8. Place of Residence and Age of Volunteer

| | Age of Volunteer (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Live in Work Neighborhood | Under 22 | 22-25 | 26 plus |
| Yes | 70 | 64 | 67 |
| No | 30 | 36 | 33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (47) | (42) | (9) |

$X^2$ = not significant

# APPENDIX A

## Table A-9. Type of Agency in Which Volunteer Worked by Place of Residence

| Place of Residence | Major Goals of Agency (Percent of Total)<br>Social Change | Service | Both |
|---|---|---|---|
| In Work Neighborhood | 84 | 61 | 62 |
| Elsewhere | 16 | 39 | 38 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (25) | (31) | (42) |

$X^2 = 27.04$ df = 4 $P \leq .001$

# APPENDIX A

## Table A-10. Relationship Between Agency Concern With Poor, Age of Volunteers and Performance

(Percent of Total)

| | Age of Volunteer | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Under 22 | | | Over 22 | | |
| Performance Level | High | Medium | Low | High | Medium | Low |
| High | 50 | 41 | 37 | 76 | 48 | 24 |
| Low | 50 | 59 | 63 | 24 | 52 | 76 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

## APPENDIX A.

### Table A-11. Relationship Between Agency Use of Volunteers, Age of Volunteers, and Performance

(Percent of Total)

Age of Volunteer

| | Under 22 | | Over 22 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Performance Level | Used as Routine Manpower | Used to Fullest Advantage | Used as Routine Manpower | Used to Fullest Advantage |
| High | 35 | 46 | 45 | 59 |
| Low | 65 | 54 | 55 | 41 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

## APPENDIX A

### Table A-12. Volunteer Perceptions of Amount of Bureaucracy in Agency and Volunteer Satisfaction

| | Amount of Bureaucracy (Percent of Total) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Satisfaction Level** | **High** | **Medium** | **Low** |
| High | 16 | 19 | 39 |
| Medium | 42 | 41 | 27 |
| Low | 42 | 40 | 33 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (19) | (58) | (33) |

$X^2 = 5.87$ df = 4 $P \leq .21$

## APPENDIX A

### Table A-13. Volunteer Evaluation of Agency Openness To New Ideas and Volunteer Satisfaction

(Percent of Total)

| | Agency Openness to New Ideas | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Volunteer Satisfaction | Very Open | Somewhat Open | Not At All Open |
| High | 32 | 20 | 12 |
| Medium | 39 | 37 | 38 |
| Low | 29 | 43 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| number of cases | (51) | (51) | (8) |

$X^2$ = not significant

# APPENDIX B

## 1. Cumulative Index: Volunteer Success on Job

Items, Weighting Scheme, and Scores

Item: Do you think Volunteers being here has made a difference in lives of the people with whom he/she has worked?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| very little difference | | | some difference | | | quite a lot of difference |

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| 7 | 1 |
| 5, 6 | 2 |
| 4 | 3 |
| 1 - 3 | 4 |

Item: All in all how do you evaluate the job competence of the Volunteer as demonstrated in his or her assignments to date?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Extremely competent | 1 |
| Very competent | 2 |
| Clearly adequate | 3 |
| Just adequate )[1]<br>Doubtful )<br>Clearly unsatisfactory) | 4 |

---

[1] In all cases where choices in an item are combined, such combinations are based on frequency distributions for group as a whole.

Item: What is your overall evaluation of this VISTA Volunteer?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Superb, a rare Volunteer | 1 |
| Very good, consistently effective and dependable | 2 |
| Good, a solid Volunteer | 3 |
| Fair, needs supervision to keep him effective) | 4 |
| Poor, sometimes is more trouble than he/she is worth) | |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at Each Score Level |
|---|---|---|
| 3, 4, 5 | High | 24.3 |
| 6 | High-medium | 22.5 |
| 7, 8, 9 | Medium-Low | 28.8 |
| 10, 11, 12 | Low | 24.3 |

2. Cumulative Scale - Volunteer Satisfaction with VISTA

Item: How satisfied are you with the work you have been given to date?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Somewhat dissatisfied) | 3 |
| Very dissatisfied) | |

Item: To what extent does your VISTA job allow you to utilize your abilities and skills?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a very limited extent | | | some extent | | | considerable extent |

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| 6, 7 | 1 |
| 4, 5 | 2 |
| 1 - 3 | 3 |

Item: On balance, would you say that the satisfactions you have experienced as a VISTA have:

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Far outweighed any frustrations and difficulties | 1 |
| Been about equally balanced with frustrations | 2 |
| Been fewer than the difficulties you have experienced | 3 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | High | 24.3 |
| 4, 5 | Medium | 37.8 |
| 6,7,8,9 | Low | 37.8 |

3. Cumulative Scale - Training Success Index

Items, Weighting Scheme and Scores

Item: All in all, how do you evaluate the job competence of the trainee as demonstrated in his or her performance to-date?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Extremely competent - can be counted on to do an outstanding job | 1 |
| Very competent - does excellent work | 2 |
| Clearly adequate- not outstanding)<br>Just adequate )<br>Doubtful )<br>Clearly unsatisfactory ) | 3 |

Item: What is your overall evaluation of this trainee?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Superb, rare Volunteer | 1 |
| Very good, consistently effective and dependable | 2 |
| Good, a solid Volunteer but without distinction<br>Fair, needs supervision to keep him effective<br>Poor, sometimes is more trouble than he/she is worth | 3 |

Item: Standing in Class

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Upper 25% | 1 |
| Middle 50% | 2 |
| Lower 25% | 3 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 3, 4, 5 | High | 35.1 |
| 6, 7 | Medium | 38.8 |
| 8, 9 | Low | 26.1 |

4. Cumulative Scale - Mode of Supervision

Items, Weighting Scheme, and Scores

Item: Who determines the tasks the VISTA Volunteer will do next?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| You (supervisor) | 1 |
| the VISTA | 3 |
| both you and the VISTA | 2 |

Item: Who decides on the details of how the job is to be carried out?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| You (Supervisor) | 1 |
| the VISTA | 3 |
| both you and the VISTA<br>depends on job | 2 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Close | 36.0 |
| 3, 4 | Moderate | 45.1 |
| 5, 6 | Loose | 18.9 |

5. Cumulative Scale - Supportiveness of Supervision

Items, Weighting Scheme, and Scores.

Item: How would you describe the relationship you have with your Supervisor?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Very warm, close | 1 |
| Friendly, but not really close | 2 |
| Neutral, we work together )<br>Not too warm, we have our problems)<br>Quite poor, we have had real difficulty) | 3 |

Item: How helpful has your immediate Supervisor been to you in carrying out the functions of a VISTA Volunteer?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Very helpful | 1 |
| Somewhat helpful | 2 |
| Not too helpful | 3 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | High | 32.4 |
| 3 | High-Medium | 23.4 |
| 4 | Medium-Low | 22.5 |
| 5, 6 | Low | 21.6 |

## 6. Cumulative Scale - Satisfaction with Supervisor

Items, Weighting Scheme, and Scores

Item: In your opinion, how much understanding does your Supervisor have of the poor and their needs?

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Considerable understanding, a real feeling for the poor and their needs | 1 |
| Good understanding, he/she knows quite a bit | 2 |
| Adequate understanding, enough to get by | 3 |
| Very little understanding of the poor and their needs | |
| No real understanding of poor and their problems | |

Item: With respect to the degree of job skill and technical know how exhibited by your Supervisor, would you say that your Supervisor has:

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| A high degree of technical job skill and knowledge | 1 |
| An adequate degree of technical job skill and knowledge | 2 |
| Only a minimum of technical job skill and knowledge | 3 |

Item: In general how satisfied are you with the supervision you have received to date?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not too satisfied | | | fairly satisfied | | | very satisfied |

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| 7 | 1 |
| 5, 6 | 2 |
| 1 - 4 | 3 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 3, 4 | high | 39.6 |
| 5, 6 | medium | 32.4 |
| 7, 8, 9 | low | 28.0 |

7. Cumulative Scale - Agency Concern With Poor

Items, Weighting Scheme, and Scores

Item: How do you characterize the agency for which you work: As:

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Very sympathetic to clients | 1 |
| Somewhat sympathetic to clients)<br>Indifferent to clients ) | 2 |

Item: How do you characterize the agency for which you work? As:

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| Very involved with the poor | 1 |
| Somewhat involved with poor)<br>Not too involved with poor ) | 2 |

Items: The following phrases have been used to describe social agencies. As I read each statement, would you please indicate whether or not you feel the statement characterizes your agency:

| Weighted Reference | Weighting |
|---|---|
| Even though there are problems, this agency is trying hard to do a job for the poor. | True 1<br>False 2 |
| This agency is dealing with some of the most pressing problems in the country. | True 1<br>False 2 |
| There is a warm feeling between the clients and staff of this agency. | True 1<br>False 2 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | High | 29.7 |
| 6, 7 | Medium | 40.6 |
| 8, 9, 10 | Low | 29.7 |

8. Cumulative Scale - Staff Commitment to Clients

Items, Weighting Scheme, and Scores

Items: The following phrases have been used to describe social agencies. As I read each statement, would you please indicate whether or not you feel the statement characterizes your agency:

| Weighted Reference | Weight | |
|---|---|---|
| There is a strong sense of purpose here and everyone, no matter what his job, pitches in to get things done | True | 1 |
| | False | 2 |
| There is a sense of enthusiasm and commitment in this agency | True | 1 |
| | False | 2 |
| The professional staff sometimes seems to have less enthusiasm and dedication than the Volunteers | True | 2 |
| | False | 1 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | High | 41.4 |
| 4 | Medium | 22.5 |
| 5, 6 | Low | 36.1 |

9. Cumulative Scale - Excessive Professionalism

Items, Weighting Scheme and Scores

Items: The following phrases have been used to describe social agencies. As I read each statement, would you please indicate whether or not you feel the statement characterizes your agency.

| Weighted Reference | Weight |
|---|---|
| The staff is very close knit, and there is a warm friendly feeling in this agency | True 2<br>False 1 |
| There are sharp demarcations between the professional staff with respect to duties and status | True 1<br>False 2 |
| It takes a long time for new procedures, ideas, or policies to filter down to the lower echelons of the staff | True 1<br>False 2 |
| There is too much emphasis on professionalism in this agency | True 1<br>False 2 |

| Score | Classification | Percent of Volunteers at each Score |
|---|---|---|
| 4, 5 | Excessively professional | 21.6 |
| 6, 7 | Moderately professional | 37.8 |
| 8 | Minimally professional | 40.6 |

ERIC Clearinghouse
MAR 23 1970
on Adult Education